

Hilbre High School Humanities College

Frankby Road, West Kirby, Wirral CH48 6EQ

Inspection dates	20–21 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The aspirational new headteacher has made significant, wide-ranging changes that have already improved many areas of the school.
- Governors are passionate about the school and support the whole community well on the improvement journey.
- The senior and middle leaders work together well so that standards at the school are rising quickly. They ensure that pupils who are underperforming are well supported to catch up.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection as teachers use good questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. All staff have increasingly high expectations of pupils, and pupils are responding to them.
- The school is improving against the key indicators. Pupils are making better progress because of the consistent approach of all staff to raising standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making faster progress when compared to other pupils.
- The house system for behaviour is making a positive difference to pupils' attitudes around the school. Pupils conduct themselves well and are proud of the school.
- Bullying, derogatory language and intolerance of those who are different from themselves are rare.
- Attendance and punctuality are improving.
- The sixth form leaders have high expectations of learners, which leads to excellent attitudes. The broad, engaging sixth form curriculum and the support they receive means learners do well and their attendance is high. Careers education and guidance are excellent and learners are very well prepared for their next steps. All move on to further or higher education, employment or training.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Throughout the school the most able pupils are not always making the progress they should.
- Pupils' literacy and presentation skills are not secure enough.
- The school does not measure how well it is moving towards its improvement targets.
- The persistent absence of some pupils continues to be high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school by ensuring that all teachers:
 - set more challenging work for the most able pupils and learners at all key stages, particularly in mathematics in key stages 3 and 4
 - focus on improving pupils' literacy skills when assessing their work
 - insist on neat and well-presented written work.
- Improve the school's strategic planning by:
 - setting clear targets in its improvement plan against which it can measure progress in its priority areas
 - making more effective use of the range of information available to check progress towards the school's key targets.
- Reduce the persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities and current Year 10 pupils by:
 - focusing the school's priorities and actions on these groups so that they improve at the same rate of others.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The new headteacher has quickly established his vision for a school that achieves the highest standards. He has already created a positive, open culture where all members of the school feel valued and can contribute to success. This was demonstrated by the very large number of staff responses to the Ofsted survey that commented positively on the new approach of leadership.
- The restructuring of the senior leadership team means that it is now effective in implementing the headteacher's aspirations. Although many initiatives are in their infancy, their impact can already be seen, particularly in the progress that pupils make.
- The school has an accurate view of the key areas for priority. The school's improvement plan has a limited number of high-profile priorities in order to focus resources effectively. This is contributing to a coherent approach from staff in supporting, and contributing to, the improvements.
- One of the school's key priorities is the effective targeting of resources to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The headteacher invited the local authority to carry out a review of the school's use of the pupil premium to assess what actions were needed. As a result, additional funding is now used directly to support individuals who are making less progress than they should and this is creating rapid improvement for this group of pupils. Subject leaders are closely involved in deciding what is needed in their areas. In addition, the school has engaged effectively with parents to share the nature of the support the school is providing for these pupils. This has led to much greater engagement of parents with the school.
- The quality of teaching is now monitored with more rigour and is accurate. The leadership of teaching is a particular strength of the school. The increased rigour is allowing staff to be supported more quickly and this is having considerable success in raising the quality of teaching.
- The decisive action the school has taken to improve the standards of behaviour, and the positive impact it has had, is recognised throughout the whole school community.
- The curriculum has been reviewed recently and is now much more aspirational and engaging, particularly for the most able pupils. Less able pupils now take fewer GCSE options to provide additional time to help them make faster progress in their basic skills. The curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of outside speakers and productions that contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. For example, a performance about the slave trade to pupils in Year 8 gave good opportunities for them to discuss the role of the British Empire in the slave trade.
- Professional development for staff is closely related to the individual needs of teachers and is driven through the performance management process. Ofsted staff surveys and feedback from teachers indicate that the training is highly valued and appropriate to different levels of responsibility.
- Many pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in local, national and global projects.
- Although the school has collected suitable data and information to inform planning for improvement, the impact of actions taken is not always brought together in such a way that they readily inform the next steps.
- The improvement plan for the school has measurable targets for the key priorities. However, the milestones and criteria for measuring the actions that will make up the strategy are not defined clearly enough, and the school does not use available information to check on progress.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body holds the headteacher to account, both formally and informally. The minutes of its meetings demonstrate that they challenge the headteacher about a wide range of aspects of the school. The chair of the governing body meets the headteacher regularly and provides mentoring support such as on personnel issues.
 - The school is well served by governors with high-level and appropriate skills. They use their talents to take an active part in supporting the school. One governor reviewed the school's drug policy, using his own experience to make a useful contribution.
 - Governors play a valuable and active role in supporting the school with improving behaviour through holding behaviour panels to review the issues in the most serious cases.
 - Governors are aware of the amount and how the pupil premium funding is used. They have informally canvassed opinions of parents to check that the new approach of the school to disadvantaged pupils is supported.

- The governing body has not always used the full range of data and information available to hold the school to account. This is because senior leaders have not always presented data and information from a wide range of sources to justify thoroughly its actions and views.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All pupils feel very safe in school. The new heads of house are highly valued by pupils. The school engages with parents effectively to explain the support pupils are given to keep them safe. This is seen by parents as a very positive action. Attendance at parents' meetings has increased dramatically.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Helpful written feedback and effective questioning are strengths of the teaching in this school. This contributes to pupils making sustained progress. Teachers deliver engaging lessons that cater for most pupils' needs effectively. There were examples of challenging work being set for pupils which developed both their knowledge and skills. In a music lesson the pupils were using their skills to critique their own and each other's performance, enabling every one of them to perform competently and accurately. The new marking policy is contributing to pupils learning from their mistakes and is consistently applied.
- In English pupils of all abilities produce very good pieces of extended writing. In key stage 4 pupils accurately explain what they need to do to make better progress. In key stage 3 teachers provide appropriate challenge when pupils are ready to move on in many lessons.
- In mathematics, pupils' progress is generally good at key stage 3 and key stage 4, but not as rapid as it is in English. Work is sometimes too easy, especially for the most able pupils, and pupils do not always use their mistakes to create learning opportunities.
- Monitoring of assessments is robust. They are checked by middle leaders and quality-assured by the senior team. Assessments are moderated externally in English and mathematics. Many staff are external examiners for GCSE examinations and apply their expertise in the school.
- Pupils have good oracy skills and reading out in class is performed with meaning and accuracy.
- Pupils have useful templates to support them in information gathering and organisation. This contributes to them developing good research skills.
- Pupils in the resource provision unit are engaged and try hard to succeed. They are making good progress as a result of strong teacher planning and subject knowledge and the use of information about each individual to scaffold learning.
- Pupils cover issues about life in modern Britain and develop a good understanding of diversity and fundamental values. They have a good awareness and understanding of the emotional issues that can affect teenage girls, which is important in building the self-esteem of the low number of girls in the school.
- Pupils and parents say that homework is set regularly and is checked.
- The school's most able pupils are less well catered for than others are. Teachers sometimes set work or give feedback that lacks challenge. They do not move pupils' learning on quickly enough when they have been successful.
- In mathematics some pupils are not able to master concepts fully before they move on and so they are not developing competency in calculations. Problem-solving skills were rarely taught effectively.
- Pupils' written work is not always neatly presented. Their work is untidy and incomplete and shows weak subject vocabulary in several subjects. Spelling, punctuation and grammar corrections are largely limited to the English department in both key stages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders ensure a high level of care and support for all pupils. Staff identify the needs of vulnerable pupils effectively and provide well-targeted help. For example, additional staff, such as a youth worker, learning mentor and a counsellor work with pupils, and have a positive impact on their personal development.
- There are positive relationships between staff and pupils and half-termly reports on the pupils' achievements.
- Teaching assistants provide highly effective, individual support for pupils to achieve well, particularly in

the 'Impact Centre', a restorative behaviour room. This has contributed to improvements in pupils' attitudes and behaviour.

- Bullying is rare and when it does occur, speedy action is taken by the heads of house, who make thorough records and check it has stopped.
- The school is an orderly environment with very little litter on the corridors. Pupils say that this has reduced recently as they have been encouraged to use bins.
- Attendance of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is improving. Many pupils have 100% attendance. This is due to improved communications with parents and carers and an effective reward system. Punctuality to school has improved significantly and the school is changing the school day to have further impact on this. Leaders compare and analyse the attendance of groups of pupils with skill.
- The school has worked effectively with other schools to tackle local issues beyond the school gate that have had an impact on behaviour in school.
- Pupils take pride in their appearance.
- Close relationships between the school and the organisations that provide off-site education ensure that the pupils involved are successful in their placements. Attendance data is shared regularly and action taken when there are concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond quickly to teachers' instructions at all times.
- Raised expectations for pupils' behaviour are shared through the 'Active Form Time' programme, delivered in form period. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced considerably and there has been a significant reduction in incidents of serious concern. Pupils, staff, parents and governors all commented on how effective this has been.
- Central to the new strategies to improve pupils' behaviour has been the focus on work with their families and the community. This has had a considerable impact in some individual cases.
- The previous internal exclusion system has been refocused and redefined. Clearer referral procedures are in place and subject leaders are expected to provide appropriate work. This means that the pupils do not fall behind with their work and so are more successful in reintegrating to class.
- Staff are now more accountable for dealing with incidents in their lessons. There is great clarity in the stages of behaviour system which all understand. This means there is a more direct and rapid link between the offence and sanction, and greater consistency of approach among staff.
- Persistent absenteeism has reduced through the use of fixed penalty notices. For some groups of pupils, however, such as those in Year 10 and those who have special educational needs or disabilities, persistent absence is still too high and a tighter focus on these groups is needed. Many of these pupils have joined the school from other secondary schools and many already had attendance problems.
- Fixed-term exclusions overall have not yet reduced. A small minority of these are due solely to the pupils who have transferred from other schools.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Results in 2015 demonstrated an improvement in the progress pupils had made from their starting points, compared with the previous year. Pupils in all years enter the school significantly below national averages in English and mathematics. Science and humanities performed above the national average at GCSE in 2015. Spanish and French results also improved considerably in 2015.
- The school's current analysis of performance is robust. Assessments have been moderated externally as well as internally by the senior leadership team. These show that rapid improvements have been made in the number of pupils making progress towards five or more A* to C grades in both English and mathematics. In English there are now double the number of pupils making more than expected progress when compared to previous years. Pupils in every year group are now making good progress. In Years 7 and 8 all pupils are improving rapidly. Lower-ability pupils in key stage 4 are making particularly good progress in English and mathematics.
- In 2015 there were some significant gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils at GCSE and other pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are now making significantly better progress; the school's data shows that any gaps in performance have been eliminated in mathematics but not yet in English.
- In GCSE dance and drama pupils are making excellent progress. Progress in some BTEC subjects was weak and the school has taken the decision to remove these subjects from the curriculum.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities have not achieved well historically but the work of the special educational needs coordinator and focused support mean that these pupils are now making rapid progress in key stages 3 and 4.
- The procedures to support children looked after are particularly effective, so individuals who might benefit from such support over time are able to succeed in external examinations.
- A small number of Year 11 pupils attended off-site provision at The Vocational College, Maritime College and the Utopia project, aiming for level 2 qualifications. Their progress was regularly and effectively monitored by the school.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils are not yet good enough in several subjects, particularly mathematics.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The leader and other staff in the sixth form have high expectations and are passionate about securing improvements. They monitor teaching and check the progress of individual learners well.
- Individualised study plans are in place which support all learners to make progress in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers know their learners well and plan effective, engaging lessons that lead to good outcomes. Teachers' questioning skills are particularly strong and are used to check learning and review individual progress against their potential.
- In some lessons the most able learners are challenged to attempt very complex problems. In one lesson learners were each given appropriately difficult mathematics questions to solve on whiteboards and could then call on their 'understudy' to give them help. The work was targeted according to their ability and their specific area for improvement, such as the setting out of calculations. However, in many lessons teachers did not take sufficient account of learners' individual starting points, leading to the most able making less progress than they should.
- The curriculum offers a broad range of courses, both academic and vocational. Retention from Year 12 to Year 13 has increased due to the curriculum being more appropriate.
- The outcomes for learners in the sixth form meet interim minimum standards. The attainment of academic learners is typically below average on entry and in 2015 outcomes were significantly below average. However, the current learners in Year 13 performed above average in their AS examinations and continue to make good progress. Verified BTEC results shows that progress in these subjects has improved over that in 2015. Success for pupils retaking GCSE English and mathematics is high and improving.
- Learners who fall behind are supported well to catch up through additional timetabled work and mentoring. Through this approach the applied science course improved the average progress of learners to well above average.
- Attendance is above average in both Year 12 and 13. Punctuality is improving. All learners feel safe and have support from the school when they need it. They behave well and know how to keep themselves safe, including online.
- Learners and staff are very positive about the careers advice given in the school. It is independent and supports the move to higher education and apprenticeships well. There is an increasing trend in the numbers moving on to university; and there was a fivefold increase in the number of learners applying to top universities this year. New initiatives include an apprenticeship evening, Next Steps evening and every learner in the sixth form being interviewed for their work experience placement. All learners moved on to education, employment or training last year and the same is expected in 2016.
- All learners complete work experience and most have been encouraged to link this to their future aspirations.
- Tutorial time is used for preparation for university applications and the next steps for learners but other aspects of preparation for life beyond school, such as dealing with finance, receive insufficient focus.
- Learners are not very familiar with issues relating to female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation the 'Prevent' agenda to combat terrorism.

School details

Unique reference number	138355
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10012143

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1042
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Greg Kemp
Headteacher	Mark Bellamy
Telephone number	0151 625 5996
Website	www.hilbre.wirral.sch.uk
Email address	schooloffice@hilbre.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has fewer girls than boys.
- It has an average proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding provided to the school for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The school has a resourced provision unit. It is a unit for 15 students with moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum condition.
- The school takes in a large number of pupils who are not succeeding in other local schools.
- Some pupils in Year 11 were educated off-site at The Vocational College and The Maritime College and worked on the Utopia Project. All of these are registered providers.
- The school had an interim headteacher from September 2015; he was made permanent in March 2016.
- The school has worked with Calday Grange Grammar School and West Kirby Grammar School on local safeguarding issues.
- The school has received support from St John Plessington High School, a teaching school, on new assessment methods. The school has also worked with Upton Hall School FJC, which has provided support to the English and mathematics departments.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection pupils in Years 7 to 10 were on examination week. This meant there were no formal lessons to see for these year groups. Revision lessons for each of these year groups were observed. Fourteen lessons in Year 12 were observed, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a range of senior and middle leaders, three governors including the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Staff from the off-site alternative provision were contacted by telephone.
- Several work scrutinies were carried out; one of these was done jointly with a senior leader.
- Four groups of pupils met with inspectors and they spoke with many pupils during social times.
- Inspectors took into account 71 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 103 responses to the Ofsted staff survey as well as using results of the school's own surveys.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan, the local authority's review of the school pupil premium spending, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school's own records of the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

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