

Inspection of Leek High School

Springfield Road, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6EU

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff and other pupils. Pupils are not aware of any bullying taking place but say it is dealt with effectively if it happens. Pupils also say that they feel safe. This is because they know they can talk to a member of staff if they have a concern and know that it will be dealt with effectively.

Pupils generally conduct themselves well around school but there is frequent low-level disruption in lessons. This is because leaders do not have high enough expectations of learning and behaviour. Many teachers do not have the knowledge and skills to teach pupils well. As a result, pupils are not learning as much as they should. A significant number of pupils have poor attendance.

Pupils have access to high-quality careers advice. Teachers provide sixth-form students with effective support for their studies. Many pupils enjoy the wide range of sports available to them.

Although pupils say they feel safe, leaders do not ensure that all pupils are safe from harm. This is because leaders and staff do not implement the actions identified in risk assessments nor complete appropriate recruitment checks on some adults working in the school.

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

Leaders have not established a culture of high expectations and ambition for pupils. They have not yet addressed the weaknesses identified at the 2019 inspection. Leaders' evaluations of the quality of education are inaccurate. Consequently, they have not identified what needs improving nor implemented the actions necessary to improve things.

The curriculum is broad, providing a good range of subjects in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. However, apart from science, the curriculum is not ambitious enough. Leaders have not put together a curriculum which inspires pupils. They have not carefully considered what pupils need to know and how teachers should order pupils' learning.

Teachers generally have secure subject knowledge. Even so, teaching often does not consider or address pupils' needs, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers do not check pupils' understanding to make sure they have understood and learned the work. Assessments do not match what pupils have been taught. Teachers are not providing effective feedback nor identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that teachers are unable to successfully adapt or modify pupils' learning. In addition, teaching assistants do not have the specialist knowledge required to support pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not do as well as they should.

Leaders understand that reading is fundamental to pupils' progress. Interventions are in place to improve pupils' reading skills in Years 9 and 10. However, interventions do not have the desired impact due to a lack of resources.

Pupils' poor behaviour and attitudes are not conducive to learning. Lessons are often disturbed by low-level disruption and some poor behaviour takes place during social time. There are a high number of suspensions and exclusions. Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This is particularly the case for pupils who are disadvantaged. Strategies to improve behaviour and attendance have not yet led to significant improvement.

Pupils learn about life in modern Britain. The personal, social and health education curriculum covers all statutory requirements. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils also access high-quality careers advice and guidance. This meets the Gatsby Benchmarks and 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. The school provides some sport-based enrichment activities.

Not all students make the progress that they should in the sixth form on A-level and applied courses. In art, there is evidence of work at an exceptional standard. Students who need to improve GCSE grades in English and mathematics do make strong progress. Students particularly value the advice and support they get for their university applications.

Governance is not effective. Governors are not aware of all their statutory duties or the weaknesses in the school. Governors' systems for monitoring pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance are not robust. For example, the pupil premium funding is not used effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress. Governors are not able to challenge leaders effectively.

The new chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust is aware of the school's weaknesses. She had already drawn up a robust plan of improvement just before the inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The single central record of pre-employment vetting checks is not fully completed or checked well enough. Part of the required essential information was missing from the single central record. This was rectified during the inspection. However, school leaders have not fully followed essential safeguarding processes when recruiting staff. Actions identified in risk assessments are not always implemented or monitored carefully enough.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They know whom to go to if they have a concern and know how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders work closely with external agencies to provide support to pupils at the right time.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not fully carry out the required pre-employment checks on new staff. This means that pupils are potentially at risk. Leaders should make sure that the school's safeguarding and safer recruitment practices follow statutory guidance. Leaders and governors should urgently improve the arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is weak and inaccurate. They do not recognise the significant weaknesses in many aspects of the school's provision. The trust should implement the action plan intended without delay to strengthen leadership and raise expectations for learning and behaviour as a matter of urgency.
- The curriculum lacks ambition and is not well sequenced. As a result, pupils do not progressively build on their prior knowledge nor make strong progress in their learning. Senior leaders should make sure that curriculum leaders have the knowledge, understanding and expertise to plan and implement a well-sequenced curriculum in their subjects.
- Not all teachers have the pedagogical knowledge to teach effectively. Leaders should provide high-quality professional development opportunities for all teachers so that they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to teach their subjects well.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well and some have poor attendance. Leaders have not used pupil premium funding effectively to improve outcomes for these pupils. Leaders should review the pupil premium strategy to ensure that the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves markedly.
- Teachers do not use the information about pupils with SEND to plan and deliver learning that meets their needs. In addition, teaching assistants do not have strong specialist knowledge. As a result, pupils with SEND do not make the progress they should. Leaders should make sure all staff know how to adapt and modify learning appropriately and support pupils effectively.
- Interventions to support weaker readers are not effective. As a result, weaknesses in pupils' reading skills are not addressed. Leaders should ensure that the impact of reading interventions is monitored and evaluated closely so that adaptations can be made where necessary. An increasing number of weaker readers should be able to read fluently, confidently and with understanding.
- Assessment practices do not indicate how well pupils know and understand what has been taught. Teachers do not regularly check knowledge and understanding in lessons and predominantly rely on examination board questions for assessments. Leaders should ensure that assessment is linked to the curriculum

and that assessment activities assess what pupils know and help teachers to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

- The management of pupils' misbehaviour is inconsistent. This leads to high levels of low-level disruption in lessons and some inappropriate behaviour in social time. There are a high number of suspensions and exclusions. Leaders should make sure that all staff understand and consistently apply effective behaviour management strategies, to improve pupils' behaviour across the school and to reduce the number of suspensions and exclusions.
- Attendance continues to be below average and too many pupils are persistently absent. This impedes pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that strategies to improve pupils' attendance are robust and effective, in order to improve attendance.
- Having considered the evidence, the inspectors strongly recommend that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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	142711
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10210946
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	William Hurst
Headteacher	Phillip Evans
Website	https://lhs.ttl.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Talentum Learning Trust in April 2016.
- The school uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and three assistant headteachers. They met with the CEO of the trust, one member of the trust board and the chair of the local governing body.
- Deep dives were carried out in art, science, English and mathematics.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in history.
- Inspectors scrutinised several documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection. They checked that the single central record contained all required information.
- Inspectors considered questionnaire responses from staff and pupils, as well as parents' responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Nicola Walters, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
David Hermitt	Ofsted Inspector

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