

Kirkby High School

Bracknell Avenue, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside L32 9PP

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- This is a school that is barely recognisable compared to how it was two years ago. Vastly improved leadership, with high ambitions, has improved both the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour considerably. And while achievement has risen, it has not improved to the same extent as other aspects of the school.
- Both the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their progress have not improved quickly.
- Pupils' self-belief is growing. However, many still do not realise how capable they are and how highly they can achieve.
- While attendance and punctuality are improving overall, they are not improving quickly enough for a significant group of girls in Years 9 and 10.
- Generally, pupils start Kirkby High School with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Despite improvements in skill levels in these areas, pupils have more catching up to do to reach the standards expected for their age.

The school has the following strengths

- Most pupils have highly positive attitudes to their school and to their learning. This is because the quality of teaching has improved considerably, and pupils now value their education.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors and the trust, have very skilfully driven highly effective school improvement.
- Many pupils attending Kirkby High School experience a wide range of barriers to learning. The school goes to great lengths to help these pupils and will often find highly personalised solutions and support for them.
- Pupils' personal development is systematically and successfully promoted throughout the curriculum, and through an increasing range of high-quality enrichment experiences.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should:
 - ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve and raise achievement across the school
 - make sure that provision for pupils with SEND improves quickly so that these pupils achieve at least as well as others in the school
 - improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
 - improve attendance and punctuality, particularly of girls currently in Years 9 and 10
 - further develop pupils' confidence in themselves, thereby enabling them to believe that they can reach their potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, at all levels, have transformed this school. Only two years ago, pupils were reluctant to attend and, if they did, many would misbehave, seriously disrupting learning. Now, most pupils really value what the school is doing for them, and they respond by working hard in lessons and joining in with school life beyond their classes. Speaking about their school, pupils expressed great loyalty to it, and they singled out the headteacher as the driving force behind the school's transformation.
- The positive influence of the trust has also improved considerably since Kirkby High School became a member of the Rowan Learning Trust in 2013. The trust has supported the school in many ways, including seconding very good leaders to key positions in the school. The trust has also been instrumental in supporting the local governing body to develop significantly, enabling it, too, to make a very valuable contribution to the school's improvement.
- The headteacher and trust have systematically developed good leaders throughout the school. They have achieved this by identifying talent, supporting and encouraging senior and middle leaders, developing their skills and giving them confidence in their own abilities. Now all leaders are absolutely clear about what their responsibilities are and what they are expected to achieve.
- There are many striking characteristics of leadership in Kirkby High School. Decisions are made solely on what is best for Kirkby pupils and not on orthodoxy. This ethos pervades the whole school and all staff are passionate about improving opportunities for children from the Kirkby community. Decisions are based on sophisticated analyses of high-quality information. Leaders' evaluations are accurate. They know exactly how well things are working and what needs to improve. They have prioritised their efforts very well and so the vast majority of pupils are now being taught well and are beginning to flourish.
- Leaders constantly review the school's curriculum and base their evaluations on how well it is serving Kirkby pupils. There are many adaptations to the curriculum for those who need different levels and types of support, and this helps them to engage better with school. Faculty leaders are now much better informed about what pupils learn in their primary schools, so they are able to plan their curriculums to avoid repetition and any slowing of learning in Years 7 and 8. These leaders are also very aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses in how they learn. They ensure that teachers accurately assess how well their pupils are building knowledge and, when they need to, teachers will adapt their plans to reinforce essential learning.
- Very high-quality leadership of teaching and learning has ensured that teachers are much more skilled in enabling pupils to learn well. Leaders have promoted a culture where teachers seek professional improvement. Teachers engage fully with the well-targeted and coherent continuous professional development programme. Daily, teachers discuss with each other what they want to improve and how they can achieve this. Teachers' expectations of how they want to perform are very high because leaders have high aspirations for the school and provide excellent support to their staff. Staff morale is high.

- Another rapidly developing strength of the school is the systematic promotion of pupils' personal development. Leaders and teachers find an increasingly wide range of activities that develop pupils' experiences, confidence and leadership skills. These include visiting groups that work with pupils to raise their self-belief and their aspirations. In addition, pupils visit colleges and universities.
- The school provides opportunities for issues that are relevant to teenagers to be discussed in detail, such as the cult of celebrity and body image. Pupils are strongly encouraged to develop a social conscience and to care about their community. Recently, many local senior citizens thoroughly enjoyed a party organised for them by pupils. Primary school pupils have visited the school to see a very good production of Mary Poppins. The school rigorously challenges local youth crime by working closely with other agencies, including the police. The school ensures that their pupils know how to react when they feel threatened or when something is wrong. Pupils are increasingly taking a stand against community problems that affect them, for example knife crime.
- Action the school has taken to improve the education of disadvantaged pupils has recently had a considerable positive impact on raising their attendance and improving their achievement. While working with all year groups, the school's most powerful strategy is to focus their efforts on disadvantaged pupils as soon as they arrive from primary schools. In this way, the school provides very effective support to pupils before the effects of disadvantage become significant barriers to their education.
- There are some aspects of the school that have not improved as quickly as others. Leaders have recently reorganised the provision for pupils with SEND. While providing good care, provision was not helping these pupils to learn as well as they could. The trust is supporting the school in addressing this by seconding a highly qualified and experienced member of their staff to guide improvement.
- Teachers' work to ensure that pupils develop their literacy skills is beginning to have a positive effect. However, leaders have identified that work to promote pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is not as effective as required. The impact of additional funding to help Year 7 pupils catch up with their peers is similarly better for literacy. Signs of improving numeracy skills for this group are less evident.
- Leaders have taken highly effective steps to improve the culture of the school, and it is now serving the vast majority of pupils very well. Leaders know precisely which pupils are not benefiting as much as others. They have started to make improvements to provision for these pupils.

Governance of the school

- The quality of governance has improved significantly since governors conducted an external review of their work in June 2017. Once again, the very effective contribution the trust has made to this aspect of leadership is evident. Governors are now absolutely clear about their role in school improvement. Like all other senior leaders, governors base their judgements on the impact of the school's work on pupils. They ask challenging questions of the headteacher and, when needed, they offer very good support and guidance. Above all, governors' expectations of what they want for the

children of this part of Kirkby have risen considerably, and they are playing their part in realising these aspirations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The caring ethos that is demonstrated so clearly by staff is infectious and pupils are now showing high levels of care for each other. Pupils have high moral standards and expectations of the way they and other children should be treated. Consequently, pupils are fully prepared to speak out when they perceive an injustice or concern. This culture is one of the key factors that supports strong safeguarding procedures.
- Leaders ensure that the school is a safe environment in which to learn and pupils feel safe. Key staff have considerable expertise, and safeguarding procedures are highly effective. All staff are well trained to respond to concerns that they may have about a pupil, and they know how to respond should a pupil disclose information to them.
- Every opportunity is taken to promote safety through teaching pupils how to identify and deal with potential dangers. This includes when using social media, when out and about in their communities and when at home.
- The school reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding frequently. Leaders use this information to improve already robust systems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Through skilled leadership, teachers' ambitions and a great deal of hard work, the quality of teaching at Kirkby High has improved considerably. Pupils now look forward to going to lessons and are responding very positively to the good quality of teaching that they experience.
- The quality of the teaching of mathematics has improved considerably. Mathematics teachers now have a much better understanding of the starting points of their pupils, including their Year 7 pupils. So, teachers now plan learning that closely matches their pupils' prior understanding, and they systematically build knowledge and skills. Across ability groups and year groups, pupils engage fully with their learning, showing enthusiasm for it through their earnest discussions and the care that they now take with their written work.
- Teaching within the creative arts faculty has been strong for some time. In art, pupils excel because teachers have created a culture of high expectation and industry. These teachers are highly skilled. They know how to develop pupils' skills and constantly encourage pupils to improve.
- There has been a school-wide drive for all teachers to develop pupils' oral skills. Teachers routinely ask good questions of pupils that require them to think deeply and then to explain their ideas to the class. Pupils are now much more confident in giving and explaining their opinions.

- All teachers are expected to develop pupils' literacy skills. Teachers who follow the school's policy on how to achieve this are helping pupils to communicate and understand text much more clearly.
- The high quality of teaching of the three separate sciences is reflected in pupils' strong progress. However, the quality of teaching of combined sciences is inconsistent.
- The quality of teaching within the technology faculty is also variable. With the exception of food technology, the standards of pupils' practical work are lower than expected for their age. Pupils' skills in writing about their ideas and products are improving as a result of the whole-school drive to improve literacy. Some pupils also show high level graphic communication skills. However, these pupils tended to say that drawing comes naturally to them, and most of these pupils take art as an option. Pupils' hard work and enthusiasm to improve, which are seen around the school, are not generally apparent in technology.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- This is a happy school where all pupils feel very well looked after, secure and valued as individuals.
- Leaders are fully aware that many pupils need additional support before they can begin to learn well. Support systems to provide this help are of very high quality and highly effective. Many pupils receive personalised support and guidance, which enables them to engage positively with the school and, consequently, they learn well.
- The school sees pupils' personal development as an integral part of fostering successful learners and preparing them for their next stages in education and training. The school provides a diverse range of opportunities, responsibilities and activities to support strong personal development. Staff and older pupils are excellent role models for younger pupils. Around the school, pupils are mature, responsible and caring.
- The school does much very effective work to promote pupils' social responsibility. As a result, pupils will express their views on what is right and wrong. This includes bullying. Incidents of bullying are rare because of the school's efforts.
- Careers education is another aspect of the school's work that has improved considerably. The school has a coherent plan for developing pupils' knowledge of, and skills for, the world of work. This process starts in Year 7 and continues throughout pupils' time in school. By Year 9, pupils have had simulated experiences of work, deepened their understanding of their personal qualities and skills, and raised their expectations about the futures they could have. Pupils visit careers fairs, colleges and universities. All pupils discuss their futures with a careers expert. This provision helps pupils develop good employability skills and attitudes. Pupils currently in Year 11 have very high aspirations and a clear understanding of how they can achieve these.
- Arrangements for the pupils who attend alternative provision have improved quickly this year. Much more care is being taken to place pupils with providers who have the capacity to help them and to engage their interest through a personalised curriculum

and support. The school has improved its frequency and quality of communications with these providers and takes effective steps to ensure that pupils are safe. However, the school is not clear about how well this provision is improving pupils' achievement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Over the past 18 months, the behaviour of pupils in and around the school has been good. Pupils socialise very well, and relationships are excellent. Pupils are both comfortable and respectful when talking to their teachers and, indeed, to all adults in the school. The large atrium soon fills up at lunchtimes and breaktimes, yet low-level misbehaviour is very rare. At the end of these sessions, hundreds of pupils filter very responsibly up two staircases. Even the youngest pupils and those who are vulnerable feel entirely safe and free from any form of intimidation.
- Last year most pupils were reluctant to make contributions in their lessons. They showed little confidence or enthusiasm to participate beyond writing in their books. This aspect of pupils' attitudes has been transformed, and they are now responding very positively to the opportunities given to them to explain, discuss and answer questions. The quality and accuracy of their written work is very much better, and pupils are proud of their work. Pupils are making a positive and significant contribution to their learning.
- In class, there is almost no disruption to learning resulting from low level misbehaviour. Pupils said that if it does happen, interruptions are minor and always dealt with well by staff.
- The school is very effective in helping those pupils who sometimes have difficulty in managing their emotions and behaviour. These pupils are able to continue to learn well, while receiving personalised support.
- Previously attendance was weak. However, this year the endeavours of staff to improve attendance have paid off, and rates of attendance this term are broadly similar to those seen in other secondary schools. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved the most. Staff are aware that some girls in Years 9 and 10 who do not attend as well as others, and they are taking action to remedy this. While the very large majority of pupils are punctual to their lessons, some pupils need to be directed by staff to make a better effort to get to class on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The achievement of Year 11 pupils who left in 2018 was poor. Some curricular decisions made three years ago had a negative impact on their results. In addition, these pupils had been exposed to typically weak teaching for most of their time in secondary school.
- Standards seen throughout the current Year 11, and to a lesser extent in Year 10, are not as high as those of their peers in other schools. This is because these pupils have missed a lot of learning earlier in their secondary school careers. The strong teaching

that is now provided is helping these pupils progress well, but they have a lot of catching up to do.

- The school's passionately held belief that pupils can only do well if they receive high-quality teaching and support from their first day in school has raised expectations of what pupils across key stage 3 should be able to achieve. Pupils currently in key stage 3 are making strong progress.
- A track record of strong teaching in the creative arts and, most significantly, in art, means that results in these faculties continue to be very good. Some aspects of technology are not well taught, and achievement in this department is not improving as quickly as it is in others.
- Achievement is improving most significantly for disadvantaged pupils and, specifically, for disadvantaged boys. Pupils with high prior attainment are also showing much improved progress.
- Pupils with SEND are showing signs of improving their achievement, although not as significantly as other groups. This is because, until recently, the expectation of how well these pupils could achieve had not been high enough.
- Year 7 pupils receiving additional support to develop their literacy skills are improving their reading quickly. Improvements in writing are also evident. These pupils are not improving their numeracy skills as quickly because an effective whole-school approach is not in place.
- Across the school, pupils are improving their reading and are becoming much better at comprehending what the writer is trying to communicate. Pupils are much more confident in their reading and many are quite self-assured when reading to groups.
- Until this year, pupils had not been well enough prepared for their next stages in education or training. However, this is improving quickly for pupils currently in the school. They are developing much stronger basic skills and are becoming more self-confident. The quality of careers guidance has improved considerably.

School details

Unique reference number	140001
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10053605

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.

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	873
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol James
Headteacher	Rochelle Conefrey
Telephone number	0151 477 8710
Website	kirkbyhighschool.net
Email address	admin@kirkbyhighschool.net
Date of previous inspection	22 February 2017

Information about this school

- Kirkby High School is a member of the Rowan Learning Trust.
- The current headteacher took up a temporary post in January 2018, and this is now a substantive role. There have been a number of other changes to the school's leadership. One member of the current senior leadership team was in post at the time of the last inspection.
- This is a broadly average-sized school. The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is more than double that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with SEND is greater than seen nationally.
- Ten pupils attend alternative provision for their education at Meadow Park, New Horizon, Evolve, Motivate, Harmonize, Active TT, Pro-Vision and the Lord Derby Academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders and managers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the Rowan Learning Trust, a national leader of governance and two members of the local governing board, one of whom is the chair.
- The lead inspector met with the trust’s chief executive officer and executive headteacher.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to pupils informally during their social times.
- Inspectors met with groups of teachers and also spoke to individual teachers.
- School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils’ achievement and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors visited classrooms, sometimes with leaders, to speak with pupils, look at their work and observe their learning.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders were party to many of the inspection activities.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Philip Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Dympna Woods	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector

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