

Inspection of Hartford Church of England High School

Hartford Campus Chester Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LH

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in this school. They say that they like their teachers and respect other pupils. Most pupils say that there is someone they can talk to if they have a concern. Leaders usually deal with bullying effectively.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour was not good in the past. However, they believe that it is much better now. Most teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Classrooms and corridors are orderly and calm. Pupils are usually punctual to their lessons.

In most subjects, pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for their learning. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils' personal development is supported well through the curriculum. Pupils understand the importance of equality and the impact of prejudice. They recognise the importance of healthy relationships. They know how to stay healthy, both physically and mentally.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils who play musical instruments often perform in assemblies. There is a range of sporting clubs, as well as wide participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Leaders reward pupils with 'Caritas and Veritas' awards in key stage 3. These recognise the contribution that pupils make towards the school's core values.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious for pupils. They have placed the suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils also have the option of studying practical subjects. The curriculum is enriched further by the strong focus that leaders place on the arts.

In most subjects, leaders have identified and ordered the concepts and vocabulary that pupils need to know. However, in other subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the building blocks of knowledge that they want pupils to learn over time. In these subjects, pupils have difficulty remembering what they have been taught.

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge. They told inspectors that they really enjoy working together to determine the best way to teach the curriculum. Teachers typically present learning clearly to pupils. Pupils make connections across their learning that help them to remember more. This enables them to achieve well across many subjects.

Overall, teachers use assessment strategies well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and quickly address any misconceptions.

Leaders accurately identify, assess and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that teachers and staff are well informed about how to best meet pupils' additional needs. Pupils with SEND progress well through the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. They achieve well.

Leaders have ensured that teachers identify key subject vocabulary. They teach key words to pupils as they move through the curriculum. Reading for pleasure is built into curriculum time. However, leaders have not provided enough effective support for those pupils who are at the early stages of reading. This makes it difficult for these pupils to access other parts of the curriculum or to take advantage of the reading-for-pleasure sessions.

Most pupils engage well in lessons. They follow the school rules so that classrooms are usually calm. Many pupils attend school regularly. However, this is not the case for some disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school. These pupils are missing vital learning.

Leaders have developed a well-designed programme to promote all aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss tolerance, respect and the rule of law. They find out about the features of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Pupils receive suitable advice and guidance, from external visitors, about future careers opportunities.

A recent leadership restructure is proving helpful to ensuring that leaders and governors have the information they need to make effective decisions. This is contributing towards improvement at the school. Governors bring a range of skills to the school. They provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge.

Most staff are supportive of the leadership of the school. They told inspectors that leaders carefully consider their workload and well-being. They say that they feel valued and supported in their role. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide effective training to staff so that pupils in need of help are identified quickly.

Leaders have strong links with the local authority and other local organisations so that they can provide appropriate support to pupils. For example, pupils spoke positively about the mental health workers who give them immediate support when necessary.

Pupils are taught about risks, such as sexual harassment and abuse. They talk knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified the small blocks of knowledge that pupils must know and remember. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking in these subjects.
- Leaders do not provide effective enough support for those pupils who find reading difficult. These pupils struggle to read with fluency or comprehension. This prevents them from accessing the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge receive the support that they need to become confident and fluent readers.
- Some disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school. As a result, they have gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that appropriate actions are put in place to support the individual needs of these pupils so that they can attend school regularly and benefit from all that is on offer.

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.

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	138148
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10256073
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,071
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jeremy Hunns
Headteacher	Rachel Pickerill
Website	http://www.hartfordhigh.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Church of England school is in the Diocese of Chester. The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2022.
- Leaders use one registered and one unregistered alternative provider for a small group of 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.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. They also spoke with members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. They met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, art and design, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley	Ofsted Inspector
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