

William Howard School

Longtown Road, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 1AR

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

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 strong leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders has improved the school in all areas since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have created a positive, welcoming culture. As a result, the school is highly inclusive. Pupils from a wide geographic area and different backgrounds come together well.
- The progress and achievement of current pupils are good. Leaders have taken effective action to address areas of weakness in outcomes in 2018, particularly for boys and for disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and well looked after.
- Pupils are well mannered and behave well in lessons and around school. Exclusions are decreasing for most pupils as behaviour improves. This decrease is not as rapid for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or disadvantaged pupils.
- The behaviour of a small proportion of pupils does not meet the high expectations of leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school. They hold leaders firmly to account.
- The provision in the sixth form is good. Students enjoy learning and make good progress as a result. The persistent absence of some sixth-form students is too high.
- The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of pupils and the local labour market. It is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and leadership opportunities.
- High-quality careers information, advice and guidance prepare pupils well for their next steps.
- Attendance is above the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, although improving, remains too low. Too many of these pupils are regularly absent from school.
- Teaching is good across a range of subjects. However, a minority of teaching does not accurately meet the needs of pupils.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils but some do not implement effectively the school's policy of improving pupils' spelling and vocabulary.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and decrease the proportions of disadvantaged pupils and sixth formers who are persistently absent from school.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teaching more accurately meets the varying needs of pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils
 - teachers focus on improving pupils' spelling and literacy skills in line with the school's learning policy.
- Further improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and boys.
- Ensure that behaviour continues to improve so that:
 - off-task behaviour and low-level disruption decrease further
 - the proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are excluded continue to decrease.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have worked with the support of the trust to bring about improvements in all aspects of school life. Leaders have brought about significant changes to make sure that pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 now receive a good quality of education.
- Leaders have created an inclusive, positive culture which is appreciated by pupils and staff. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds come together as one community to learn and develop. Leaders promote equality and pupils are tolerant and respectful of others, regardless of differences.
- Leaders are passionate in ensuring that pupils are safe in school and in the wider community. The guidance and support provided for pupils, particularly for their emotional health and well-being, are of the highest quality. Staff care, and pupils appreciate this.
- Leaders' provision for the personal development of pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, is notable. For example, the care and support offered by leaders to children looked after ensure that these pupils progress well academically and emotionally during their time in the school. Leaders communicate closely with the headteacher of the virtual school and ensure that pupils receive any necessary support from the local authority or other agencies. Leaders work closely with social workers to ensure that pupils' personal education plans are aspirational and effective in meeting pupils' individual needs.
- Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils and the local community. An increasing proportion of pupils now study English Baccalaureate subjects. As a result, the curriculum prepares pupils well for the next stages in their lives.
- Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and enjoy the many opportunities to develop their leadership skills and support the local community. Pupils are proud to represent the school in sporting events and participate in many fundraising activities. These extra-curricular activities further enrich the curriculum offer.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are a strength of the school. Leaders use the nationally recognised Gatsby benchmarks to continue to improve careers provision. As a result, pupils experience numerous opportunities to meet a range of employers, trainers and further education providers. Pupils receive high-quality information which helps them to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Leaders provide a wide range of alternative provision when necessary to enhance the curriculum offer and meet individual pupils' needs. The small number of pupils who attend alternative provision attend on a part-time basis. Their attendance is tracked and monitored to make sure that they are safe and are achieving well.
- The curriculum contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Personal development lessons, religious education lessons, assemblies,

charity events and visits are used effectively to raise pupils' awareness of a range of views, cultures and social issues. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

- Transition links with primary schools are strong. Leaders begin to get to know future pupils and their families early. This ensures that transition from primary to secondary school is as smooth as possible for pupils and their families. Leaders use these close links with primary schools to ensure that the curriculum for pupils is appropriately challenging.
- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used well to improve the outcomes, attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders review the impact of these strategies and make changes if they are not successful. However, while improvements can be seen in the attendance, behaviour and progress of current disadvantaged pupils, these improvements are not sufficiently rapid or sustained.
- Leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Leaders make strong and effective links with external organisations to provide tailored support for pupils with SEND. This is particularly true for pupils with mental health concerns. Appropriate, targeted support helps pupils to learn. Training for staff ensures that strategies are used to support pupils effectively to make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Middle leaders are clear about school priorities and are held to account by senior leaders. Some middle leaders are relatively new in post and are beginning to make improvements to teaching and the curriculum in their subject areas. Middle leaders work closely together and are determined that current pupils will continue to make stronger progress than that seen last year.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is effective. As a result, senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from bespoke training. Teachers value this professional development, which includes opportunities within the trust, through links with other schools and through nationally accredited leadership programmes. Teachers who are new to the profession feel well supported by leaders.
- Staff morale is high. Almost all staff enjoy working at the school and are proud to be a member of staff at this school. Staff feel well supported by leaders and appreciate the steps leaders have taken to reduce workload and create a climate where teachers feel valued and respected.

Governance of the school

- The local advisory board is passionate and committed to improving the school for the benefit of pupils and the local community. Members of the board know the school well.
- Working with the trust and the chief executive officer of the trust, the local advisory board challenges and supports the headteacher to bring about continued improvements in all areas of school life.
- The local advisory board is aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and is accurate in its assessment of these. Members of the board are proud of the school's curriculum and personal development. They recognise that the progress and

attendance of disadvantaged pupils require further improvement so that they achieve better and attend school more regularly.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding which runs throughout the school. Leaders and staff are aware of the role they play in ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff undertake regular training which enables them to identify any pupils in need of help and support. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil.
- Referrals to other agencies are timely and followed up appropriately. Leaders carry out the necessary pre-employment checks and statutory requirements are met.
- Most pupils who responded to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire said that there was an adult in school whom they could talk to if they were worried. Pupils feel safe in school. Staff, parents and carers agree. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good in a range of subjects, including English, physical education and geography. The majority of teaching over time is effective, particularly for the most able pupils and those with SEND. These pupils benefit from teaching which meets their needs well and helps them to achieve their best. Pupils with SEND receive good support from teaching assistants in lessons.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and is used well to explain new and challenging concepts to pupils. Teachers use questioning skilfully to develop pupils' thinking.
- When teachers' expectations are high and they set learning that is well matched to the needs of pupils, pupils respond positively and engage in their learning. This is evident in most teaching, and the great majority of pupils learn effectively. However, when teaching does not adequately meet the needs of pupils, a small minority of pupils can become disengaged from their learning, engage in low-level disruption and display an apathy towards their work. Evidence seen in pupils' books and of learning over time shows that some pupils' experiences of learning can vary due to some remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders are supporting staff to ensure that all pupils benefit from effective teaching.
- Work in pupils' books is typically well presented. However, some pupils' presentation deteriorates, and learning is weaker. This occurs when pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, become disenchanted due to finding their work either too easy or too difficult. Some learning for lower-ability pupils is designed to keep pupils busy, rather than challenging them to think about their work and develop their understanding, knowledge and skills.
- Teachers assess pupils' current achievement through assessment 'flight paths', which pupils and teachers use to identify where pupils are now and what they need to know, do and understand in order to progress further. This assessment information is moderated in school, within the trust and with local schools to ensure that it is accurate

and reliable. Some teachers are GCSE examiners and use this knowledge and their skills to support other teachers in accurate assessment. As a result, teachers know how well pupils are doing and can use this information to address quickly any gaps in pupils' learning.

- There is a focus on developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers identify and correct key vocabulary to help pupils improve their literacy and writing skills. When teachers use this strategy effectively, pupils' extended writing improves. Some inconsistencies in the application of this policy hinder this development for some pupils.
- Homework is used to consolidate pupils' understanding and extend their knowledge of the concepts they have been taught. Most pupils acknowledge the value of homework and complete it accordingly.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors, particularly older pupils, talked positively about the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. The vast majority of pupils are attentive and listen well to their teachers and classmates.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's core values of 'respect, responsibility and resilience' thread through all aspects of school life. Pupils are polite and well mannered and respect others. They listen carefully to the ideas and opinions of others. Most pupils enjoy school and are proud to be pupils at William Howard School. They wear their uniform smartly.
- Leaders work closely with a wide range of external agencies to raise pupils' awareness of issues such as mental well-being and driver awareness. Leaders recognise the growing concerns about physical and mental well-being. Through the personal development curriculum, assemblies and the website, pupils are encouraged to talk to others if they are experiencing anxiety. WHS well-being champions and sixth-form mental health ambassadors are trained and readily available to support pupils and provide advice on taking care of themselves, particularly during examination periods.
- Pupils, parents and staff say that bullying is rare, and that staff deal with it effectively when it does occur. Information provided by the school showed that any incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved swiftly.
- Strong systems are in place to support vulnerable pupils. Leaders and staff are vigilant and make sure that pupils and families receive appropriate support in a timely manner. Relationships with other agencies are strong and leaders follow up any concerns with tenacity. Pupils say that there is a range of adults to talk to in school if they have any concerns. Drop-in sessions are available to pupils at breaktimes to provide personalised guidance and support.
- Pupils interact well with each other. Pupils are tolerant of each other, regardless of differences, and socialise and work well together. There is a wide range of extra-

curricular clubs and activities which broaden pupils' experiences and enable them to pursue interests and hobbies and learn new skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. There is a calm and orderly environment around school when pupils move to lessons sensibly.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. The vast majority of pupils behave well.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are reducing, as are the number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions. The use of exclusions has decreased significantly as behaviour has improved and rigorous systems are in place to support pupils better in managing their own behaviour. However, the proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are excluded are not falling as rapidly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils generally focus well on their learning, although some pupils engage in low-level disruption at times in class. On occasions, the behaviour of a minority of pupils does not meet the high standards expected.
- Attendance of all pupils is rising and is now above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has fallen considerably. However, although improving, the attendance and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils remain barriers to their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils who achieved a standard pass and above in English and mathematics GCSE examinations was typically above the national average over the past three years.
- Results from the 2018 public examinations indicated that pupils' progress, particularly that of boys, dipped in a range of subjects. Leaders at all levels have been quick to identify the reasons behind these anomalous results, and strategies have rapidly been put into place to improve the progress and attainment for current pupils on roll.
- Current pupils make strong progress in a range of subjects and across year groups. The information provided by the school shows that current pupils are achieving better compared to pupils in previous years with similar starting points. Work seen during lessons and in books over time supports the school's assessment information, which shows that pupils in Years 7 to 11 are making good progress over time. This is especially the case in English, geography and transition classes.
- Leaders and teachers know how well pupils are progressing and act swiftly to support any pupils at risk of underachieving. Disadvantaged pupils and boys are making stronger progress than previously. Work in books is of a high standard and is generally presented well.

- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved as a result of good teaching, higher attendance rates, fewer exclusions and the effective use of pupil premium funding and resources.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported and make good progress from their individual starting points. These pupils receive well-targeted academic support and make improved progress as a result.
- Pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up benefit from an integrated package of support. Leaders identify the gaps in learning for pupils and make sure that pupils then follow a transition pathway which supports their progress, both academically and pastorally. Pupils make strong gains in their reading and numeracy skills. When pupils make up lost ground, they integrate seamlessly back into the mainstream. As a result of this wrap-around support, pupils flourish and develop their confidence, knowledge and skills.
- Teachers' higher expectations have a positive impact on the progress of pupils across the curriculum. Most pupils are on track to meet their aspirational targets, especially the most able pupils, because challenging and stretching work is now planned to meet their needs.
- Leaders promote a culture of reading across the school. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their love of reading in school. The library is a hub of industry during breaks and lunchtimes. Large numbers of pupils go to the library to read, work or use the computers.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision for part of their education generally attend and behave well. Leaders ensure that these placements provide pupils with bespoke academic and pastoral opportunities to be successful and prepare them well for life after school. As a result of these courses, some pupils go on to secure places on training courses or employment with training.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment and training. A comprehensive careers education programme ensures that pupils receive high-quality information, advice and guidance. As a result, all pupils go on to appropriate further education, employment or training when they leave school. Pupils in key stage 4 value the guidance they receive in helping them to make decisions about future careers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Outcomes for students over the past three years show that students make progress in line with national averages on A-level courses and applied general courses. Information provided by leaders shows that current students in Year 13 are making strong progress due to continually improving teaching. Outcomes are particularly positive for students with SEND.
- Leaders are effective in ensuring that students who fall behind are supported both academically and pastorally. As a result, leaders and teachers quickly identify and address any student's underperformance.
- Leaders take decisive action to address any weaknesses in the curriculum. Leaders are aware of variations in outcomes for some courses. Clear plans are in place to address these inconsistencies so that all students make consistently strong progress across the

curriculum. As a result of leaders' interventions, some subjects are no longer part of the school's offer and others, such as applied science, are improving rapidly.

- The small number of students who join the sixth form without achieving a good pass in English or mathematics GCSE make very good progress in subsequently gaining these qualifications. The success rates, particularly in GCSE mathematics, are higher than those seen nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' expectations of the standard of work that students produce are high. Teaching is planned well to meet the needs of students and relationships between students and teachers are positive. Students' recall of previous learning is strong and students work well collaboratively. Over time, learning is embedded, as students can recall subject knowledge and understanding and can apply them well.
- Attendance and absence procedures are generally effective. As a result, overall attendance for Year 12 and Year 13 students is in line with the national picture. However, too many students are persistently absent from school.
- Retention from Year 12 into Year 13 compares favourably to the national average. This is a result of an appropriate curriculum which meets the needs of students and the local labour market. A broad range of courses attracts and retains students, who are guided well when making subject choices on entry to the sixth form.
- Students feel safe and supported in the sixth form. They enjoy the sixth form at William Howard School and value its diversity and welcoming ethos. The vast majority of students demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning.
- Enrichment opportunities are engaging and wide-ranging. Students in Years 12 and 13 take part in activities such as sport, foreign visits, drama productions and voluntary work. A wide range of leadership opportunities, from sports leader roles to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, encourage students to develop high-order personal skills and prepare them well for the wider world.
- Sixth-form students regularly support younger pupils with their learning through progress coaching, helping with reading and mentoring. Links to international schools help students to gain wider perspectives about the world.
- High-quality careers advice ensures that the vast majority of students are well supported when considering their next steps. Good guidance and support prepare students well for university, employment and apprenticeships.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The sixth form meets the requirements for the 16 to 19 study programmes, including meaningful opportunities for students to gain valuable work experience. Leadership of the sixth form is strong and effective in continuing to improve the provision for students.

School details

Unique reference number	137252
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10057942

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,460
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	240
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dr John Storr
Headteacher	Mr Chris McAree
Telephone number	01697 745 700
Website	www.williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	mail@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized school with a sixth form.
- The school serves a wide rural catchment area.
- William Howard School became an academy in February 2012 and is part of Cumbria Education Trust.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is below average. A number of pupils are supported through the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average, but the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The school has a special educational needs resource base for nine pupils with severe learning difficulties.
- The school currently uses alternative provision at a range of providers to contribute to the education of a small number of key stage 4 pupils. These are The Gillford Centre, Progress Schools, Educla, Carlisle College, RWP Training, Susan's Farm and Stone Eden.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects in different year groups. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons, assemblies and other activities.
- Inspectors met with pupils to listen to their views, both formally and informally.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, in assemblies, in lessons and at the end of the school day. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and looked at a sample of their books jointly with leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a group of middle leaders and newly and recently qualified teachers. Inspectors also spoke with the chair and a member of the local advisory board, as well as the chief executive officer of the trust. Inspectors spoke on the telephone with the headteacher of the virtual school and with some of the school's alternative providers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 187 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as the comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. Inspectors took into account the 108 responses to a questionnaire for pupils and the 99 responses to a questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

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