

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Parrs Wood High School

Wilmslow Road, East Didsbury, Manchester M20 5PG

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 March 2025

Outcome

Parrs Wood High School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Mark McElwee. The school is part of the Greater Manchester Education Trust, which means that other people also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Damian Owen, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Suzannah Reeves.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students in the sixth form are proud to be part of this diverse community. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe when they are in school and know who to speak to if they are worried or upset. Pupils who join the school at different times of the year say they are made very welcome by the whole community.

Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Despite this being a large school, staff make sure that all pupils are known as individuals. Pupils move around the corridors calmly. Most pupils behave well in lessons.

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Staff are determined that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain the knowledge and skills that they need to thrive in their future lives. Pupils in key stage 4 achieve well in public examinations.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy the extensive opportunities that enhance their personal development, including drama, music and visits close to home and abroad. Many pupils told inspectors that they enjoy the wide range of sporting activities available to them.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. The school is proud of the opportunities that pupils have to study three modern foreign languages and to select ancient history as an option at key stage 4. Across all subjects, the school has considered carefully what pupils need to know and when this content should be taught. In each subject in key stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form, the curriculum sets out clearly for staff the essential knowledge that pupils and students need to learn.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, and they present information clearly. In key stages 3 and 4, they use strategies that help pupils to learn and retain knowledge well. The school has thought carefully about the best way for teachers to check pupils' learning. As a result, across different subjects, teachers are consistently effective at identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and swiftly remedying any misconceptions. Consequently, pupils are knowing and remembering more essential knowledge than they did in the past.

In the sixth form, the school has also made changes to its subject curriculums and teaching strategies. The changes have been made to improve outcomes, which in 2024, the published data shows were below national average by the end of Year 13. However, the impact of these changes varies between subjects. This affects how well some students progress through some subject curriculums.

The school identifies pupils with additional needs accurately. Staff are trained to be able to support pupils with SEND in their learning. This helps pupils with SEND to progress through the same ambitious subject curriculums as their peers.

The school accurately identifies pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. Most pupils become more confident readers due to the support that they receive. Many pupils enjoy reading. The school library is well stocked with inviting fiction and non-fiction books. All younger pupils are expected to read regularly in form periods and during their library lessons.

Typically, pupils behave well around the large school site. The school studies patterns of behaviour across the school and acts swiftly if they identify any issues that need addressing. Sixth-form students set a good example to younger pupils with their mature attitudes. They also enjoy their own spacious 'college' building, which they use respectfully.

The school has prioritised raising the attendance of pupils in key stages 3 and 4. As a result, overall attendance has improved over the past two years. Pastoral leaders work closely with those pupils and their families who struggle to attend school regularly, engaging with other agencies if necessary. In the sixth form, expectations about attendance have also been raised, leading to similar improvements in attendance rates for students.

Pupils follow a very well-designed programme of lessons and activities that promote their personal development. Pupils' understanding of issues and opportunities in the wider world are enriched by many outside speakers. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge about a wide range of matters, including relationships and sex education. Pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form speak highly of the quality of careers and higher education advice that they receive at school.

Trustees and members of the local governing body are very well informed about the school's priorities. They support the school well and hold it to account for the impact of its work. Staff's workload and well-being are taken into consideration when policy decisions are made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the sixth form, there is some variability in how the recent changes to the curriculum are being implemented. This means that some students in a few subjects do not achieve as well as they should. The trust should ensure that there is greater consistency in the implementation of the changes so that students achieve well in all of the subjects that they choose to study.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good for overall effectiveness in December 2013.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143260
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10348346
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1858
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	360
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Suzannah Reeves
CEO of the trust	Damian Owen
Headteacher	Mark McElwee
Website	www.pwhs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative provisions for a small number 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.
- The school joined the Greater Manchester Education Trust in September 2022.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes and spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- An inspector spoke to a representative from the local authority. He also spoke with representatives of the local governing body and trust, including the chair of the local governing body and the chair of the trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector

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