

Alsop High School Technology & Applied Learning Specialist College

Queen's Drive, Liverpool, Merseyside L4 6SH

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The standard of education has not improved enough since the last inspection because leadership and management, including governance, require improvement.
- Governors do not effectively hold leaders to account. Consequently, outcomes did not meet the government's 2016 floor standards.
- Leaders, including governors, do not effectively monitor and evaluate the use of the pupil premium or funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, outcomes and attendance for these pupils are not improving quickly enough.
- School leaders do not review or evaluate the use of the Year 7 catch-up premium effectively. Consequently, actions and interventions are not planned as well as they should be.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, do not evaluate the impact of actions and interventions consistently. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils are not making as much progress as they should.
- Pupils, including the most able, make least progress where teachers do not plan activities that challenge them suitably.
- Pupils' extended writing has not improved sufficiently this year, despite it being a focus for school leaders. This is because teachers do not include it in their lesson plans consistently.
- Questioning is not used effectively across a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils do not improve their knowledge, understanding or oracy consistently, leading to low outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form has improved since the last inspection and is good. It is well led and students are taught well. Outcomes are good and, when they leave, students move on to appropriate further education or employment.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is a strength of the curriculum. The school is a safe and happy community, where diversity is recognised and celebrated.
- Leadership of some subjects is good or improving rapidly, such as art, English, photography and Spanish. In these subjects, all pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving monitoring and evaluation systems so that leaders know which interventions are leading to improvements for pupils
 - tackling the inconsistencies in leadership by making sure that where there are strengths they are shared
 - making sure that governors have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to challenge leaders and hold them to account
 - improving the impact of targeted funding by having a sharper focus on planning and monitoring.
- Raise the achievement of pupils, most particularly the most able, disadvantaged pupils, those who need to catch up and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by making teaching more effective through:
 - planning activities that suitably challenge all pupils
 - improving the impact of questioning by raising the standard of oracy and giving pupils opportunities to extend their responses
 - ensuring extended writing is used more widely and consistently across subjects.
- Improve the attendance and reduce persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they match national averages.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school's leadership, including the governing body, has not been successful in improving the quality of education quickly or consistently enough since the last inspection.
- School leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their improvement plans have a sharp focus on the aspects which require the most and immediate improvement. However, plans are not monitored and reviewed consistently.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment has not had a consistently positive impact across the school. In some areas, such as art, Spanish and the sixth form, leadership is good, and because of this teaching is regularly good or better, including for high-ability pupils. However, this is not the case in other subjects, such as science. In these areas, leaders do not set high enough expectations for their pupils, and school-wide initiatives to improve outcomes, such as the focus on developing extended writing, are not used well or consistently.
- The plans put into place by school leaders since the previous inspection have led to better attendance overall, including in the sixth form. However, leaders have not been effective in ensuring that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend school regularly. School leaders are not always effective enough in monitoring and reporting attendance.
- Pupil premium funding is not used as effectively as it should be. School leaders do not assess or review the impact of actions and interventions well enough. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make less progress than that of other pupils nationally and their attendance is lower than that of other pupils nationally.
- The impact of strategies funded through the Year 7 catch-up fund is uneven. In some areas, interventions have been successful. Inspectors heard Year 7 pupils who have had extra support through the catch-up funding read well because of the good progress they have made this year. However, leaders do not review the impact of the actions and interventions thoroughly so they do not build on successes or make changes when strategies are not effective.
- School leaders have improved the range of subjects pupils study. For example, at key stage 4, the overwhelming majority of pupils now follow qualifications that will ensure better outcomes than in previous years. Consequently, far more pupils are successful in moving on to the next steps in education, employment and/or training than they were at the time of the last inspection. School leaders have sensible plans to offer a broader science curriculum in the future so that pupils have the opportunity to study separate qualifications for biology, chemistry and physics at GCSE level.
- Pupils value the extra-curricular opportunities that are provided. They are many and varied, including sports, academic and cultural opportunities. Consequently, they are well attended by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Subject leadership requires improvement. In some subjects, such as art, English, photography and Spanish, leadership is good. Consequently, pupils make good progress because of good teaching and high expectations. However, the quality of leadership is inconsistent and in other subjects, such as geography and science, outcomes are not good. Outcomes are beginning to improve in mathematics, because school leaders have reviewed how it is led.
- Leadership of careers education and information, advice and guidance is effective. The numbers of pupils who successfully move on to their next stages in education, employment and/or training is high and has improved since the last inspection. However, school leaders have not yet reviewed or acted upon a survey they set up for pupils who left Year 11 in 2016, where a significant proportion of pupils said that careers guidance could be improved.
- The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is having a positive impact. Both their outcomes and attendance have improved this year. However, their progress is below that of other pupils nationally. Their attendance has improved since the last inspection, but remains well below national averages. School leaders are not always effective in monitoring and acting on the information they have about the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The outcomes, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and curriculum of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are led and managed effectively. School leaders regularly monitor and support pupils and providers.
- Teachers, including those who are newly and recently qualified, say that the training programme provided by school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school is well planned and effective. They say they are well supported in improving their teaching.
- Performance management and pay progression is led and managed effectively. Targets, which include those relating to the progress of pupils, are set and reviewed by school leaders and governors. Staff and school leaders are eligible for pay progression only if these targets are met.
- The leadership of the curriculum to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge and fundamental British values is a strength of the school. Consequently, pupils learn about and respect the views and cultures of others. Pupils say that racist and/or homophobic bullying is not an issue at the school and that diversity is celebrated.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not challenge the headteacher and senior leaders effectively enough. Consequently, pupils' outcomes in 2016 were below national floor standards.
- Governors play a key role in the performance management of staff and school leaders, including the headteacher. They are insistent that school leaders and teachers should meet and expect high standards, including those relating to pupil outcomes.
- Governors recognise that their systems and practice require review. Consequently, they have requested an audit of their effectiveness in this academic year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained in safeguarding and there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Clear systems are in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils. Leaders liaise effectively and promptly with parents and outside agencies who support pupils' welfare.
- Pupils say they are safe because school leaders make sure they are taught how to be safe in school and in the wider community. They describe the support they are given as very effective, for example with e-safety, gang activity and knife crime. Staff are vigilant in ensuring their safety and pupils say they know who to speak to if they have any concerns. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire said that pupils are happy and safe at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching and learning is too variable across the school. Consequently, pupils' achievement varies across subjects and year groups. Despite improvements in some subjects, such as English and mathematics, and good teaching in the sixth form, teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers do not plan activities that challenge pupils often enough. The work set is sometimes too easy for middle- and high-ability pupils. Consequently, in these lessons, pupils do not make good progress from their starting points. In subjects where teachers plan challenging activities regularly, such as art and Spanish, pupils make good progress, including the most able pupils.
- Where teaching is good, teachers' assessments are regular and effective. Pupils are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of their work and are given the time and support to reflect and improve upon it. Consequently, they make further progress, such as in English. Pupils make less progress where assessment is weaker or less consistent, such as in science.
- School leaders have identified the development and regular practise of extended writing for pupils as a school priority, following their analysis of the reasons for weak outcomes in 2016. However, teachers do not follow this expectation consistently. Consequently, the standard of extended writing is not good overall.
- Teachers do not always use questioning effectively. Where there is good questioning, pupils are encouraged to think about and discuss their learning. Consequently, they make good progress, including in their extended written work. However, too often questioning is less effective. Pupils are not encouraged to develop their ideas orally, and this limits the quality of their written work.
- Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their outcomes are not being monitored and assessed effectively to ensure that teaching promotes fast enough progress by these groups of pupils. Teaching is

generally better for these groups of pupils in Year 11. It is weaker across a broad range of subjects in Years 7 and 8.

- There are good standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning in most lessons. This is particularly the case where activities are challenging and expectations are high, such as in art, English and Spanish. Where teaching fails to sustain their interest or the work set is not challenging enough, pupils' behaviour can sometimes deteriorate. Some pupils' books show incomplete or poorly presented work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the teaching of fundamental British values are strengths of the school. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their beliefs and attitudes through lessons, assemblies, guest speakers and other events. They are encouraged to participate in appropriate activities in school, such as the recent Hillsborough Justice Day. Pupils say that diversity is recognised and celebrated within the school community. School leaders have developed strong links with Holocaust memorial groups and pupils benefit from regular visits and commemorative events.
- Pupils and parents say that bullying is rare, including racist and homophobic bullying. They are confident that any incidents are spotted by staff or reported by pupils and dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils learn how to remain safe and healthy. They are taught why they should have a healthy diet and stay fit. Pupils follow a programme of lessons and activities that teach them how to recognise risks, including keeping themselves safe online and from gang-related crime. Consequently, they say they feel safe in school and the community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection, but the attendance and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities requires further improvement, so that it is in line with the national average.
- In the main, pupils are well behaved around school and at breaktimes and lunchtime. However, a small minority of pupils leave litter in the corridors and on the playground at breaktimes and lunchtime. Positive relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults, are a strong feature of the school. Pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and take pride in their work. However, when expectations are not high enough or activities do not challenge pupils suitably, their attitudes to learning can deteriorate. In these lessons, some pupils can disrupt the learning of others.

- School leaders have been effective in reducing exclusions. The number of pupils who are excluded from school has reduced since the last inspection. In part, this is because of the effective in-house provision school leaders have developed for pupils who are at risk of exclusion or who are supported here instead of being excluded.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress, by the end of Year 11 in 2016. Partly this was because the curriculum pupils followed was not broad and balanced enough to meet the demands of the new progress measures set by the government.
- Outcomes are better this year because most pupils follow a broader range of subjects. However, the progress of pupils remains inconsistent because teaching is not always challenging enough.
- The progress of pupils with above-average starting points has improved in some subjects, because of higher expectations set by school leaders. For example, the Alsop Scholars' Programme and 'super-sets' initiative have resulted in significantly more pupils with above-average starting points making strong progress in Spanish than has been the case previously. In English, high-ability pupils are making better progress in Year 11 because their work is suitably challenging. However, in other subjects, the outcomes of pupils with above-average starting points are less consistent.
- School leaders, including governors, recognise that outcomes for pupils in mathematics and science were poor in 2016. Pupils did not make enough progress whatever their starting point, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The leadership of both subjects has been restructured. Consequently, the work of current pupils in mathematics is beginning to show improved outcomes, although these remain inconsistent. Similarly, the progress of pupils in science is not good.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, including those with above-average starting points, require improvement. Their progress is inconsistent. School leaders recognise that disadvantaged pupils have better outcomes across a broad range of subjects, including English and mathematics, in Year 11 than in Year 7 or Year 8. In these year groups, leaders say they plan to implement a 'catch-up' plan.
- Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities require improvement. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 7 and 8, progress is not monitored closely enough. Consequently, their outcomes are not good.
- There is a positive culture of reading at the school. School leaders and teachers provide opportunities for pupils to improve their reading. Consequently, pupils who have low starting points and are supported through Year 7 catch-up initiatives, and those who have above-average starting points, make good progress in reading.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The leadership and management of the sixth form has improved since the last inspection and is good. Leaders innovate, review and evaluate provision systemically. Consequently, improvements are rapid, effective and sustainable.
- Teaching is good in the sixth form and, because of this, outcomes are good. In 2016, results were much improved on previous years. In academic subjects, including A-level qualifications, outcomes were in line with the national average, including for disadvantaged students. In vocational subjects, results were significantly above the national average, including for disadvantaged students. These good outcomes are being sustained by current students, including those in Year 13 who are taking their examinations in the summer.
- School leaders have evaluated the reasons for improved teaching and outcomes in the sixth form. They attribute it, in part, to the consistent and high levels of extended writing students now produce over a broad range of subjects. Consequently, they are extending this successful practice to subjects in Years 7 to 11.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Safeguarding is effective. Students behave well because they have high aspirations. This is reflected by their attendance and punctuality. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is good, including for disadvantaged students. Punctuality to lessons is also good and has further improved this year because of effective leadership.
- Good provision has been made for the large numbers of students in Year 12 who require English language and mathematics GCSE resit classes. These classes are taught well and, consequently, students make good progress in both subjects.
- Students are positive about the curriculum choices they are offered. They can choose from a range of academic and vocational courses, and GCSE resits in English and mathematics if they require them. There are good opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, strong careers support and work experience. However, for some students, plans for work experience need to be implemented more quickly.
- Students are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of the sixth form, including their teaching and progress. Consequently, retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are high. Any students who do leave the sixth form at this point benefit from high-quality support and guidance. All 13 of the students who left the sixth form at the end of Year 12 in 2016 moved on to further college courses, apprenticeships or full-time employment.
- Careers guidance and preparation for further study is effective. The number of students, including disadvantaged students, who move on to higher education, training or employment has increased since the last inspection. An increasing number of students move on to university courses, including Russell Group universities, because of their high aspirations and improved outcomes.

School details

Unique reference number	104693
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10032199

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
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	1,601
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	332
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marilyn Fielding
Headteacher	Joe Mangan
Telephone number	0151 235 1200
Website	www.alsophigh.org.uk
Email address	office@alsophigh.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 April 2015

Information about this school

- This is a large school, with significantly more pupils than the national average. The school also includes 16 to 19 provision.
- The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by the school is well above the national average. The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students and those supported by the pupil premium is much larger than the national average.

- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at the Everton Free School.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up premium on its website.
- The school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11, in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, a local authority representative and members of the governing body.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on issues including safeguarding, bullying, teaching and careers guidance.
- Inspectors examined a range of supporting documentation such as the school’s self-evaluation, the school’s improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors considered 25 responses to the online parental questionnaire, 42 responses to the staff questionnaire, and the small number of responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors conducted learning walks and lesson observations across a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these walks.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in pupils’ books and by undertaking work analysis with school leaders.

Inspection team

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