

Inspection of Middlewich High School

King Edward Street, Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 9BU

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are ambitious for pupils at Middlewich High School. Pupils respond well to leaders' expectations that they should aspire, believe and belong. In recent years, leaders have considerably improved many aspects of the school. Pupils and staff spoke positively about the changes that leaders have made.

Leaders have created an increasingly academic culture. Leaders have secured considerable improvements to the quality of education. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), achieve well.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Most pupils are respectful towards each other and to adults. Pupils typically have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. However, some pupils do not always choose to behave as well as they should in lessons and around the school. Leaders have successfully established effective systems to improve the behaviour of these pupils.

Pupils explained that leaders do not tolerate bullying or the use of derogatory language. When bullying incidents occur, adults deal with these quickly and effectively. Pupils comment that they can approach staff about any worries or concerns they may have.

Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer, to develop their skills, aptitudes and interests. These activities include numerous sports and performance opportunities. For example, during the inspection, pupils were keen to share how much they were looking forward to taking part in the Christmas production.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have provided staff with clear direction and a suitably ambitious curriculum so that they can raise pupils' aspirations and achievement. Leaders, together with staff, are committed to providing the best quality of education that they can. Staff are keen to develop and embrace new ideas. They have access to high-quality training opportunities that are aligned well with leaders' priorities.

Leaders have successfully supported subject leaders and teachers to ensure that the curriculum is well designed. Subject leaders have thought carefully about the key knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this content should be taught. All pupils in key stage 3 study a broad range of subjects. Pupils in key stage 4 can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses. An increasing proportion of pupils study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Teachers, including those staff at the earlier stages of their careers, have strong subject expertise. In many subjects, teachers use their knowledge successfully to help pupils understand key concepts, ideas and skills.

Most teachers use assessment systems effectively to check on pupils' learning. For the most part, teachers deliver the curriculum consistently well, and pupils achieve highly. However, in a small number of subjects, some teachers are still developing the most effective approaches to delivering some aspects of curriculum content. In these subjects, some pupils learn less well.

Leaders have put in place a whole-school approach to prioritise the teaching of reading. For example, pupils enjoy regular form-time reading from a diverse range of books, authors and themes. Most pupils who need help to improve their reading receive effective support from well-trained staff. However, a small number of older pupils do not benefit from this support. This hinders how well some of these pupils access the wider curriculum.

Staff identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Staff use the information provided by leaders to support pupils with SEND effectively. This includes those pupils in the specially resourced provision. Pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers and access an appropriate curriculum.

Leaders have made considerable improvements to pupils' behaviour. Most pupils focus on their learning and follow teachers' instruction diligently. However, some pupils have not adjusted to leaders' higher expectations of their behaviour. At times, these pupils disrupt the learning of others.

Leaders have developed a strong personal development curriculum. Pupils have meaningful opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues that are important to them. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about British values. For example, they are aware of the dangers of extremism and prejudicial behaviours. Leaders provide pupils with advice about age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. Pupils talked confidently about the dangers of sexual harassment and abuse.

Pupils have a growing number of enrichment options available to them. These include debating societies, reading clubs, sports, drama and music activities. Pupils told inspectors that they were excited about their planned ski trip to Austria.

Leaders have ensured that pupils receive suitable and informative careers advice. Pupils are provided with opportunities to meet with local employers and to visit further education and sixth-form colleges in the local area.

Staff appreciate leaders' support for their well-being. They were positive about the steps that leaders take to manage their workload. Staff morale is high.

Governors skilfully support and challenge leaders to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff are trained well to identify, recognise and respond to the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff report and follow up any concerns appropriately.

Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies. They ensure that pupils and their families receive timely help when necessary.

Pupils receive appropriate information about how to look after their well-being. They have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe, such as when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not regulate their own behaviour as well as they should in lessons and during social times. This means that, occasionally, their behaviour disrupts the learning of their peers. Leaders should continue their work with these pupils, to secure ongoing improvements to their behaviour.
- In a very small number of subjects, some teachers are still refining how well they deliver the curriculum. This hinders how well some pupils learn in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that all teachers are equipped to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- A small number of older pupils do not read as well as they should. This affects how well some of these pupils access the wider curriculum. Leaders should ensure that older pupils benefit fully from leaders' strategies to develop and improve their reading knowledge.

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

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| Unique reference number | 148693 |
| Local authority | Cheshire East |
| Inspection number | 10241017 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 708 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Colin Price |
| Headteacher | Heidi Thurland |
| Website | www.middlewichhigh.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Middlewich High School converted to become an academy school in December 2021. When its predecessor school, Middlewich High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined the Sir John Brunner Foundation Multi Academy Trust in 2021.
- The school operates a specially resourced provision for pupils with hearing impairments and/or with autism spectrum disorder. There are currently 14 pupils in this provision. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Places are commissioned through the local authority.
- Leaders make use of three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information 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 that 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 met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors spoke with the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the multi-academy trust, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, history, science, English and modern foreign languages. In these subjects, inspectors held meetings with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the leaders responsible for safeguarding. They also scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records, including the pre-employment checks on staff. Inspectors evaluated leaders' procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gary Kelly, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Derek Yarwood | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sally Rix | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Sarah Mitchell | Ofsted Inspector |

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