

Halewood Academy

The Avenue, Wood Road, Halewood, Knowsley, Merseyside L26 1UU

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

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	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have created a culture of aspiration that pervades this school. Together with improved teaching, this has transformed pupils' attitudes to learning.
- The support provided by the Wade Deacon Trust has been pivotal in the school's successful journey out of special measures. Leaders of the trust have shown strong moral purpose in their mission to provide a good education for the pupils of Halewood.
- Subject leaders have played a crucial role in driving the school forward. They lead by example and demonstrate an uncompromising passion for further improvement.
- Inadequate teaching and poor leadership, so evident at the time of the previous inspection, have been eradicated. As a consequence, teaching is characterised by high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils get off to a flying start when they join Halewood in Year 7 because teachers build effectively on what they have already learned at primary school.
- Although the sixth form is closing, this closure has been handled sensitively and with the interests of students close at heart. As a result, their progress has not been hindered and they have achieved well.
- School leaders have been successful in tackling absenteeism, which for so long has plagued this school. Pupils can see the connection between attendance and progress. They are motivated to attend because they want to succeed.
- Pupils across the school, including the sixth form, benefit from a wide-ranging programme to provide advice on careers, training and further education.
- Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils show pride in their school. They appreciate the hard work of their teachers and do not want to let them down.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress. However, the progress of pupils in Year 11 and, to a lesser extent, that of those in Year 10 requires improvement. This is because the progress of older pupils has been hampered by poor teaching in the past.
- Literacy is promoted well but initiatives to support numeracy are underdeveloped.
- Although behaviour has improved substantially, the rate of exclusion remains too high.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce exclusions by ensuring that the small minority of pupils who exhibit poor conduct follow the good example set by most pupils in managing their own behaviour well.
- Embed current successful initiatives to promote literacy and encourage all pupils to develop a love of reading.
- Support current improvement in mathematics by ensuring that numeracy skills are developed well across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Two years ago Halewood Academy was inadequate. At the last inspection, teaching was characterised by woefully low expectations and many pupils did not even bother to turn up to school. This is no longer the case; now this school lives and breathes its mission statement: 'Inspirational teaching for aspirational learners'.
- The principal and vice-principals have been highly effective in establishing a shared vision for improvement that extends to all members of the school community. A pupil spoken to during the inspection summed up the changed ethos of the school in this way: 'The teachers have made us see that learning is important'.
- The pace of change has been phenomenal. The green shoots of improvement that were evident at the previous monitoring inspection in June 2016 have become embedded and grown to fruition. School leaders' self-evaluation is accurate and plans for further improvement are sharply focused on the correct priorities: this is a school that knows where it is, where it wants to be and what it needs to do to get there.
- High-quality leadership, emanating initially from the executive monitoring board and then, more recently, in combination with the Wade Deacon Trust has been pivotal to the school's success. As a result, this is a school that has transformed itself after for too long languishing in ill-deserved complacency.
- No stone has been left unturned in the drive to wipe out inadequate teaching and leadership. Poor practice has been challenged relentlessly through robust procedures for performance management. Since the previous inspection, over two-thirds of the previous teaching staff, including some at leadership level, have left. They have been replaced with enthusiastic, effective leaders and teachers who have all bought in to the Halewood vision.
- Strong leadership is not just the preserve of senior leaders but is firmly established across the school. Subject leaders have played a crucial role in propelling the school forward by translating senior leaders' vision into improvement at classroom level. As a result, there is a unity of purpose and consistency of practice that underpin the school's strong trajectory of improvement.
- Teachers are highly complimentary about the programme for professional development, designed to suit their individual needs and support them at whatever stage they may be in their career. This programme has helped teachers to hone their skills so that they can meet leaders' high expectations for pupils' achievement.
- School leaders have attacked historical underachievement of disadvantaged pupils with a multifaceted approach that has reaped dividends. For example, whole-school improvement to the quality of teaching has benefited disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils alike, as has the culture of aspiration that now pervades the school.
- Nevertheless, where specific barriers to learning experienced by disadvantaged pupils have been identified, the pupil premium has been used intelligently to remove obstacles that may have prevented pupils achieving their potential. As a result, it is fair to say that the use of the pupil premium has been highly effective, leading to rapidly

diminishing differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are taught about social issues, such as crime, in lessons and assemblies; they have a strong sense of fair play, respecting other cultures and faiths. Visits and activities, such as trips abroad or to theatres and art galleries, help to broaden pupils' minds and enrich their lives. Membership of the 'Brilliant Club' has been immensely beneficial and a number of more-able pupils have had the support of tutors from prestigious universities to coach them and raise their aspirations.
- School leaders promote British values effectively. Pupils are well informed about democracy and during the inspection could talk articulately about the forthcoming general election. Pupils are regularly consulted and encouraged to express their views: for example, they were highly involved in the selection of the school's motto.
- School leaders have used the Year 7 catch-up funding effectively, enabling pupils who entered the school with weak skills in reading, writing and mathematics to make up some of the ground they had lost in primary school. Equally, funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been spent wisely. The leadership and management of this area is strong and these pupils make good progress.
- The reputation of the school in the local community has been restored, resulting in a year-on-year increase in the numbers of parents sending their children to Halewood. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. Despite this very positive picture of engagement with parents, there is still a small minority of parents that the school finds difficult to reach.
- The school has gained immensely from its highly productive partnership with a local primary school. Subject leaders have visited the school and rewritten schemes of work to accommodate the increased challenge of the primary curriculum and ensure that teaching in Halewood Academy builds effectively on what pupils have already learned. Transition between primary and secondary phases is highly focused on pupils' prior achievement so that pupils get off to a flying start when they join the school in Year 7.
- The local authority has provided effective support and regularly attends meetings of the executive monitoring board.
- The curriculum has for some time been flawed. This is because of decisions taken by previous leaders of the school. Although current leaders have now developed a good curriculum, they did not tackle weaknesses swiftly enough. This legacy of a poor curriculum has had a deleterious impact on the progress of older pupils, which is not as good as that of pupils lower down the school.

Governance of the school

- At the time of the previous inspection, governance was weak. Over time, there has been a tremendous overhaul of the governing body and it has grown in confidence and expertise. As a result, governors now hold school leaders to account very effectively.
- The executive monitoring board has the benefit of being chaired by a primary

headteacher of a local good school, who has been tenacious in her commitment to Halewood. This was particularly difficult just after the previous inspection when the immensity of the task ahead seemed so daunting. However, she never gave up on the school and was highly instrumental in initiating the first tentative steps to improvement.

- The support provided by the Wade Deacon Trust has been the single most determining factor in the school's improvement journey. Trust leaders have not imposed their model of success, but have allowed the school a degree of autonomy so that the unique identity of Halewood has been maintained. School leaders feel that they have been 'done with' not 'done to', which has helped them to feel proud of their achievements that have been so hard-won.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school works highly effectively with many agencies in order to ensure that all pupils are safe, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, robust checks are made on all placements for work experience and alternative provision and attendance off-site is monitored assiduously. All staff and governors have regular training in safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, and are vigilant regarding the risks that pupils may be exposed to, for example radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has been reinvigorated through the appointment of highly competent staff, strong professional development and expert subject leadership. As a consequence, the pace of improvement in the quality of teaching has been exponential.
- Teaching overall is characterised by high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils remarked to inspectors how, over time, lessons have become much more challenging and that they can see the benefits of pushing themselves to achieve a higher standard.
- The most able pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, have responded positively to improvements in teaching. These pupils are well motivated and aspirational, demonstrating their commitment to learning by attending school on a much more regular basis than was the case formerly. The increased level of challenge has ensured that these pupils make strong gains in their learning, on the whole.
- Teachers apply school policies, such as those relating to marking, presentation and assessment, consistently across the school. This enables pupils to understand clearly teachers' expectations in all their subjects and to improve their work.
- Teachers have high standards regarding the presentation of pupils' work. Pupils set their work out neatly and can therefore refer back to previous work if they need to remind themselves of what they have already learned. This helps pupils to make progress by building effectively on prior learning.
- Time in lessons is not wasted. Pupils work productively and purposefully, because

teachers plan engaging activities that keep pupils on task.

- Teachers use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. Teachers' questioning is based on sound subject knowledge and is well judged, encouraging pupils to voice ideas and develop their powers of expression. This is particularly the case in English and modern foreign languages, where practice is exceptionally strong.
- Assessment is used highly effectively in most subjects. In lessons, teachers use assessment to adapt their teaching to the needs of pupils, adding support or challenge. Marking promotes improvement and helps pupils to understand what they are doing right and where they are going wrong.
- Information on pupils' progress is gathered frequently and used intelligently by both senior and subject leaders to spot underperformance and provide additional support or intervention if required.
- Teaching assistants are engaged productively in the classroom. They make a strong contribution to pupils' progress, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Literacy is promoted well across the school and strategies to do so are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are having a positive impact. Nevertheless, school leaders have struggled to imbue a love of reading in all pupils and the well-stocked and attractive library sadly remains an under-used resource.
- The promotion of numeracy skills across the curriculum is not well developed and as a consequence there is little evidence of impact.
- There remain some pockets of weaker practice in teaching, such as in science, where improvement has been at a slower pace.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There are very few incidents of a racist nature and pupils we spoke to were adamant that bullying based on prejudice, such as homophobia, is very rare. They explained that this is because they feel they have been taught well to respect the rights of individuals; as one pupil commented: 'This school is like a big community where everybody knows each other.' In this way, the school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively.
- School leaders have been relentless in tackling absenteeism, which has for a long time plagued this school and stood in the way of pupils making better progress. Attendance has a high profile. Teachers attend well, motivating pupils to follow their example. Pupils have responded positively because they have an increased desire to do well in their studies; the school has helped them to make the connection between attendance and progress. As a result, attendance is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school has been particularly successful in turning round the attendance of groups of learners who for some time have been very reluctant to come to school. The

persistent absenteeism of girls and disadvantaged pupils has decreased substantially, as has that of the most able disadvantaged pupils. As a consequence, the rate of persistent absenteeism is now below the national average.

- Although the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, it has not done so at as fast a rate as that of other pupils. The poor attendance of some of these pupils has a negative impact on their achievement.
- There is a wide-ranging programme to provide pupils with advice on careers and the next steps in their lives. This programme links well with local employers to inform pupils' choices by giving them experience of the world of work. This also helps pupils to understand what opportunities are provided by the local economy. The positive impact of this well-conceived programme can be seen in the fact that the proportion of pupils who do not go on to further education, training or employment when they leave school is well below both local and national averages.
- Pupils who attend training off-site are respectful to local employers, who commented favourably on their conduct.
- School leaders ensure that all pupils are taught to assess risks in the outside world. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were well aware of, for example, how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- School leaders have successfully created a culture of aspiration, which, in combination with improved teaching, has transformed pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils show pride in their school and do not want to let their teachers down.
- School leaders have taken a firm line in tackling poor behaviour since the previous inspection and over time there has been a rise in exclusions, both fixed-term and permanent. As a consequence, the exclusion rate remains too high because a very small number of pupils do not manage their own behaviour as well as the vast majority of pupils do.
- Pupils commented how behaviour has improved markedly. Parents who have completed surveys conducted by the school to gauge their opinions echoed this point of view.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive for good behaviour and understand clearly the consequences for poor conduct. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons in general and there were very few examples of disruption observed during the inspection.
- Pupils mingle well together in social spaces and move around the school in a calm and orderly fashion. They respect the school environment and there was no graffiti or litter seen during the inspection.
- Pupils feel safe in school and well supported by staff. They know they can always approach staff to talk through problems they may be facing in their lives. Pupils were categorical that bullying, should it occur, is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time, smartly dressed and ready to

learn. In this way, pupils have developed good habits and are well prepared for the next stages in their lives.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Since the previous inspection there has been a strongly improving trajectory in outcomes for pupils, albeit from a very low base. Nevertheless, a legacy of poor leadership, teaching and curriculum in the past continues to have a negative impact on the achievement of older pupils. As a result, although pupils in Year 11 are now making good progress, they have had so much ground to make up that overall they have not achieved as well as they might during their years at Halewood.
- Assessment information for pupils in Year 10 shows a stronger picture regarding achievement and this was confirmed by lesson observations and when inspectors examined pupils' books. According to data provided by the school, Year 10 pupils are on target to have made good progress overall by the time they leave school next year.
- School leaders have taken all feasible steps to ensure that the information they collect on pupils' progress is accurate, by comparing with other schools, both in the Wade Deacon Trust and further afield. It is true to say that, in 2016, the school's predictions for GCSE results were spot on, which further supports the validity of the assessment information that school leaders have gathered.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make good progress across a range of subjects. This is because they have had the benefit of strong teaching, high expectations, improved leadership and good attendance for a longer period than pupils higher up the school.
- The achievement of the most able pupils has improved strongly since the previous inspection and in 2016 the overwhelming majority of these pupils performed well in their public examinations. The school monitors closely the achievement of this group of pupils and inspection evidence points to them making good progress in a number of subjects and across year groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those that are most-able, are catching up rapidly with other pupils nationally and in some year groups outperform their peers. The improved attendance of this group of pupils has had a direct bearing on improved outcomes.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities for the most part make good progress given their individual starting points. Pupils are involved in putting together their own education, health and care plans, which helps to ensure that their views are taken into account. The poor attendance of some of these pupils, although at times perhaps unavoidable given the complexity of their needs, remains a stumbling block to their achievement.
- Pupils who attend training off-site do well in their placements and local employers are impressed with their attitudes to work. The school is vigilant in checking that these pupils attend well and make good progress.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- In 2016, after a process of consultation, the decision was taken to close the sixth form

to new entrants as falling numbers had made it unsustainable. Students at that point in Year 12 were allowed to complete their studies at Halewood. There are therefore currently only 34 students in the sixth form and the official date for closure is August 2017. This closure has been handled with sensitivity and due regard to the needs of students.

- The leadership and management of the sixth form is good. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and hold subject leaders to account rigorously for outcomes in their area of responsibility. Students' progress is tracked assiduously and support is provided when students fall behind.
- Despite the imminent closure of the sixth form, school leaders have stood by their commitment to current students and provision fully meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programme.
- Students in the sixth form have benefited from the overall improvement to the quality of teaching and higher expectations existing across the school. As a result, since the previous inspection, students who decided to remain at Halewood Academy to follow post-16 courses have overall made good progress, particularly in vocational subjects.
- Progress in academic subjects has been more variable and the small number of students in each subject renders statistical analysis unreliable. Students overall do well in art, dance, drama, photography and history but less well in other subjects, such as science. Some more-able students have successfully completed extended research projects, which has prepared them well for their forthcoming university studies.
- The small number of students who entered the sixth form without a grade C at GCSE in English were all successful in achieving this grade or higher when they sat the examination again. The success rate in resits in GCSE mathematics has not been as strong. Teaching in mathematics has historically been weaker than that in English. Therefore students who entered the sixth form without a C at GCSE in mathematics had considerable ground to make up because of weak teaching in the past in this subject.
- Students benefit from an excellent programme of independent careers advice and guidance that is designed to meet their individual needs and aspirations. All students also have the opportunity to develop their employability skills through work experience. As a result, the overwhelming majority of students have high hopes for their future and go on to pursue further training, such as through apprenticeships, education or employment, when they leave school.
- Students in the sixth form attend regularly. They have the opportunity to take on responsibilities and support pupils lower down the school. The programme for personal, social and health education supports their development effectively and prepares them well to take their place in society. Sixth-form students provide good role models for younger pupils, conducting themselves maturely and taking their studies seriously.

School details

Unique reference number	139614
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10020363

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
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	983
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	34
Appropriate authority	The Wade Deacon Trust and local governing body
Chair	Ian Hann and Derek Darlington
Principal	Gary Evans
Telephone number	0151 477 8830
Website	www.halewoodacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@halewoodacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Halewood Academy converted to become an academy in May 2013. At that point it was judged good, but went into special measures at the subsequent inspection in April 2015. At the time of that inspection, the current principal had been in post for two terms.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has worked very closely with Wade Deacon, a local outstanding school. Wade Deacon is the leading institution of the Wade Deacon Trust. Halewood has been part of this multi-academy trust since February 2017.
- Halewood is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school, with a very small on-site sixth form.
- The sixth form was closed to new entrants last academic year due to lack of viability and there are currently only Year 13 students on roll, in the process of completing their studies.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well above average and increasing.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The academy uses alternative provision for a very small number of pupils, from a number of providers including Harmonize Academy, Fairbridge, YPOP, Progress Sport and Basetech.
- The academy has undergone substantial changes to its leadership team and governance since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 4 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons across most subjects, visited classrooms at form time and watched how pupils behaved at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including: information on the progress of current pupils; the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for further development; evaluation of the impact of expenditure of the pupil premium; records of behaviour, attendance and liaison with other agencies; policies, including those relating to safeguarding; and records relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and performance management.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups. We talked to a large number of pupils, both formally and informally.
- Meetings were held with the principal, leaders at all levels, staff, the governing body, representatives of the Wade Deacon Trust and the local authority. Telephone contact has been made at previous monitoring visits with organisations providing training for pupils off-site.
- Inspectors took into account the 31 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and looked at surveys run by the school to gauge the views of parents.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Erica Sharman	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Olsson-Law	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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