

Inspection of Spen Valley High School

Roberttown Lane, Liversedge, West Yorkshire WF15 7LX

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish in this nurturing school. Leaders have high expectations for all. They focus on helping staff and pupils build positive relationships. Pupils usually behave respectfully in lessons and at social times. A minority of pupils sometimes use unacceptable language.

Pupils feel safe. Bullying happens occasionally. Staff address it quickly and effectively. Staff are 'trauma-informed'. This means they know how to support pupils who need extra help to manage their emotional well-being. Although pupils are proud to be part of the school community, some do not attend often enough.

In English and mathematics, pupils remember what they have been taught. They do not remember as well in subjects such as science. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. A recently appointed leader of SEND has ensured that staff know how to help all pupils learn.

Leaders foster a love of reading innovatively. Their 'fine dining taster menu' events challenge pupils to read a wide range of texts from genres they might not have tried before. Pupils who struggle with reading are given targeted support.

Some, but not enough, pupils access a range of extra-curricular clubs. These include sports clubs, creative writing and an innovative young engineers club.

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

Leaders, supported and challenged by governors, have a clear vision for the school. They are enthusiastic about preparing pupils for life beyond school. Pupils learn about the wider world, including different cultures. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The new personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils to learn about respect. Pupils can identify signs of an unhealthy relationship. This helps them to stay safe.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Small pockets of poor behaviour persist. These pockets are addressed by staff through agreed rules and sanctions. Staff manage behaviour in a way that is personalised to the pupil and the behaviour. For example, if a pupil drops litter, their sanction involves picking up litter. If a pupil offends someone, they account for their actions in a restorative meeting. Pupils sometimes misbehave because they are not coping well with the difficulties they face outside of school. If a pupil is struggling, they are given appropriate support. Pupils whose behaviour was previously poor told the inspectors about how the school helped them to change. The majority of pupils learn to cope better and behave better. Leaders have instilled a strong emphasis on building pupils' confidence.

Leaders have introduced an ambitious programme of training for staff. Staff learn from research. Teachers also learn from sharing their experience of delivering the curriculum with each other. They have frequent opportunities to discuss the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, teachers meet each week to discuss forthcoming topics. Staff are positive about the opportunities they are given.

Leaders have high ambitions for pupils, including those with SEND. A broad range of traditional and technical subjects are available to pupils.

The number of pupils following the English Baccalaureate pathway is increasing from a low base. This group of subjects is providing pupils with a wide range of options for later study. Leaders are aware that the implementation of the curriculum is stronger in some subjects than others. Curriculum planning is carefully sequenced and detailed in most subjects. Staff know what to teach and why. They revisit important knowledge and skills to help pupils remember their learning. Careful assessment helps teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders have identified weaker subjects and plans are in place to improve them. In science, for example, pupils do not benefit from a well-planned and well-sequenced curriculum. This contrasts with English and mathematics, where pupils' experiences are more positive.

Careers education at the school is beginning to improve. This is important as, over time, pupils have not had strong support in this area. A new careers lead is introducing a wide range of strategies to help pupils to be better prepared for the world of work.

Aspects of school improvement have been affected adversely by the pandemic. Some pupils are not attending school as regularly as leaders expect. This is especially true for vulnerable pupils. Leaders have clear procedures for making sure pupils who are not in school are safe. They are developing strategies to address poor attendance. For example, leaders have planned assemblies about why regular attendance is important. These strategies are not fully embedded.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff know their pupils well. Leaders communicate regularly with each other about pupils' welfare. They identify pupils who need help. Leaders refer concerns to external agencies so that pupils are given the support they need. Leaders and governors understand local risks to pupils. For example, they are aware of the risk of extremist groups radicalising pupils. Pupils are taught about local risks. They know how to keep themselves safe online and offline. Pupils learn about respectful relationships and personal responsibility. Pupils have a trusted adult they can talk to.

Appropriate checks are made when new staff join the school. These rigorous checks help to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum planning is more detailed in some subjects than others. Where planning is weaker, for example in science, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders should continue with the training and support in place to help curriculum leaders strengthen these subjects.
- Some pupils, especially the most vulnerable pupils, do not attend school often enough. These pupils are missing out on vital learning opportunities. Leaders should accelerate their work to improve pupils' attendance.
- The wider curriculum offer is in its early stages of development. Many aspects of the careers programme are in their very early stages of development too. These are important opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge, skills and confidence. Leaders' plans to expand the extra-curricular clubs and strengthen careers education should now be enacted.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	107778
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10211146
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	937
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Kelly
Headteacher	Hayley Clacy
Website	www.spennyvalleyhighschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post since the previous inspection. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- The school makes use of alternative provision. Two providers are used: Ethos Academy Trust and Brian Jackson College. Both are registered with Ofsted.
- Through its careers programme, 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 inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. Inspectors visited specific lessons to check provision for pupils with education, health and care plans.
- Members of the inspection team met with those with responsibility for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with the chair and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took into account 70 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and 92 responses from parents to Parent View. This included 90 free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupils' survey.
- An inspector spoke with two providers of 'alternative provision' who are currently educating a small number of pupils who usually attend this school.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks. They spoke to governors, the designated safeguarding leader, the behaviour lead and looked at how incidents are logged and followed up. Inspectors explored a range of case studies in detail. Inspectors also spoke to a range of teaching and non-teaching staff to check their understanding of safeguarding training.

Inspection team

Zoe Helman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Duncan	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Pridding	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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