

Inspection of Wade Deacon High School

Birchfield Road, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 7TD

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Wade Deacon High School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Wade Deacon High School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Wade Deacon High School are completely committed to the 'Wade Deacon Way'. They talk about it with passion. Pupils fully live out the school's values to respect themselves, to be the best that they can be and to believe in themselves. These behaviours are consistently evident in pupils' respectful interactions with each other and with staff. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms is exemplary, reflecting leaders' high expectations of their conduct.

Pupils are extremely happy at this school. They are confident that staff have their best interests at heart when making decisions about their education. The quality of pastoral support available to pupils is a key strength. For example, if bullying ever happens, staff deal with issues swiftly and effectively.

Pupils undertake an impressive range of opportunities to enrich their wider personal development. They embrace leadership roles, for example as a prefect or a subject ambassador. Pupils thrive in the extra-curricular clubs on offer, such as dance, creative writing, and robotics and electronics. They relish the opportunities that staff provide for them to be involved in a variety of competitions locally and nationally.

Leaders have very high expectations of what every pupil can and should achieve. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well. They benefit from a first-rate education, including an aspirational curriculum, that gives them a firm foundation for their future learning and employment.

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

Leaders and staff are fully committed to excellence for every pupil, regardless of their background or ability. They fully realise this vision. Leaders have also designed a rich and ambitious curriculum, which includes a suitably broad range of academic, vocational and creative subjects. Leaders have carefully considered the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. Pupils' achievement is exceptional.

Teachers skilfully use their strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum expertly well. As a result, all pupils, including pupils with SEND, develop a deep and rich body of subject knowledge. Teachers take care to build pupils' confidence and resilience in learning. Increasingly, pupils embrace the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. They recognise these subjects as a firm grounding for post-16 learning.

Leaders ensure that staff make excellent use of assessment strategies across different curriculum subjects. Teachers identify and address pupils' misconceptions in learning quickly and accurately. Inspectors found that pupils have a deep grasp of the content of subject curriculums. Pupils make complex and sophisticated connections between topics and concepts. There is an air of scholarly excellence.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading across the school. They are quick to identify any deficits in pupils' reading knowledge. Staff provide timely and appropriate support to enable those pupils who fall behind in their reading to catch up quickly. Consequently, leaders ensure that these pupils access the full curriculum. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the books that they are reading and they are regularly found reading for pleasure in the library.

Leaders and staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately and swiftly. Teachers receive high-quality information about the needs and wishes of the pupils that they teach. As a result, teachers skilfully adapt the delivery of subject curriculums for pupils with SEND. Consequently, all pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. They are fully included in school life and achieve very highly.

Across the school, pupils are fully focused on their learning. Pupils learn without disruption. They behave impeccably well around the school site. Pupils' rates of attendance are high and continuously improving.

Pupils recognise and celebrate the diversity of the school population and of the wider world. They respect the uniqueness of individual people. The personal development curriculum enables pupils to explore and debate issues with maturity, such as tolerance, the rule of law, and sexism. Leaders consistently promote consideration, respect, good manners and a positive work ethic.

Pupils enjoy high-quality and impartial careers advice and guidance. This broadens their horizons beyond their local context. Pupils are incredibly positive and ambitious for their future careers. They are fully equipped for the next steps in their education and/or training. Leaders are tenacious in following up on former pupils to ensure that they settle fully into their next phase of education or employment.

The school's local governing body and board of trustees support and challenge leaders to improve the quality of education for pupils continually. Staff are extremely proud to work at this school. They appreciate leaders' considerable efforts to care for their well-being. Staff describe the school as a 'community' where everyone cares for and supports each other.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide effective, up-to-date safeguarding training for staff and governors. Staff act quickly to identify vulnerable pupils. The safeguarding team has fostered close links with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the timely support that they need. Staff are quick to support pupils in need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through a thoughtful and age-appropriate sex and relationships curriculum. For example, pupils learn about respectful, safe

relationships and healthy ways of dealing with conflict. They understand about sexual consent. Pupils know how to stay safe when online.

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

Unique reference number	139368
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10242419
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,596
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Fowler
Principal	Simon Corner
Website	www.wadedeacon.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wade Deacon High School converted to become an academy in March 2013. When its predecessor school, Wade Deacon High School, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2011, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the Wade Deacon Trust.
- Leaders currently send a small number of pupils to three registered alternative education providers. They also use one unregistered provider run by the local authority.
- 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 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.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art and design; English; geography; modern foreign languages; physical education; and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited some lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also reviewed aspects of the curriculum in computing, history and mathematics. They also met with the subject leaders of these subjects.
- Inspectors met with the principal, vice-principals, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the Wade Deacon Trust, members of the trust board and members of the local governing body. They also spoke with a representative of Halton local authority.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the checks made on staff and governors. Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, governors, staff and pupils to discuss safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documents pertaining to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered survey responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour around school, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. They spoke with pupils about behaviour and bullying.

Inspection team

Niamh Howlett, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Anne Murphy	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Gregory	Senior His Majesty’s Inspector
Charlotte Oles	His Majesty’s Inspector
Sanjay Patel	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Cocker	Ofsted Inspector

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