

Inspection of The Oldershaw School

Valkyrie Road, Wallasey, Merseyside CH45 4RJ

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 April 2025
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

The executive headteacher of this school is Steve Fisher. This school is a single-academy trust and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Murphy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' behaviour on the corridors is often boisterous and chaotic. Many pupils struggle to conduct themselves in an appropriate and respectful manner. Too often, this poor behaviour goes unchallenged by adults. When it is challenged, pupils are often confrontational, defiant and, at times, rude.

This unacceptable behaviour regularly transfers into classrooms. Lessons are frequently disturbed and pupils' learning is often interrupted. In addition, profanities, including highly offensive and derogatory language linked to misogyny, are regularly heard. This typifies the disrespectful culture in the school.

Many pupils are not happy in the school. A very high proportion of them do not attend school regularly. Once in school, many pupils truant and wander around the school instead of going to lessons.

The school's expectations of pupils' achievement are too low. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported well enough. Weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum mean that pupils do not achieve well. For too long, pupils' academic outcomes in both the main school and sixth form have been poor.

The school has begun to offer some pupil leadership opportunities. However, pupils are reluctant to volunteer for such roles. Some pupils enjoy experiencing the wider world through the school's trips to France or to coastal resorts.

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

The trust and school are too accepting of the barriers that hinder school improvement. They have been too slow to drive forward the change that is needed to ensure that pupils receive an acceptable standard of education. This is because leaders do not have an accurate grasp of the current weaknesses in the school or of the reasons why these weaknesses exist. This means that they have not focused on the right priorities. The school is unaware of the strategies that are needed to accelerate improvement at the pace required.

The school has not established high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Some staff do not feel well equipped or supported to manage pupils' challenging behaviour. Staff do not apply the behaviour policy consistently. Many pupils are not actively engaged in their learning. Apathy is commonplace. Pupils are frequently unwilling to participate in lessons, preferring, for example, to sit with their heads on the desk. Unruly and disruptive behaviour thwarts pupils' chances to learn. Pupils' unacceptable behaviour contributes to low achievement across the curriculum.

The school does not have sufficiently robust procedures in place to analyse attendance data. While there have been some recent glimpses of improvement, pupil absence and persistent absence rates remain unacceptably high. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND.

The school has taken some early steps to improve its curriculum. In many subjects, the essential knowledge that pupils should learn has been identified. Teachers know their subjects well. However, many teachers lack the expertise to design ambitious learning activities that give pupils opportunities to apply and use their knowledge. Often, activities are too simple and do not help pupils to develop a deep understanding of the subject over time. This is also true in the sixth form, where students are ill-prepared for their next steps.

Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Often, teachers are unaware of this because they do not check well enough what pupils know. Therefore, misconceptions and gaps are not routinely identified or rectified. This contributes to the poor achievement of pupils, including students in the sixth form.

The school has processes in place to identify pupils' additional needs. The small number of pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND have their needs met well. This is not the case for pupils with SEND in the rest of the school. Staff lack the expertise and knowledge to support pupils with SEND effectively. Learning is not adequately adapted to help these pupils to achieve well. Many pupils with SEND do not have their needs met. As a result, they do not learn as well as they should.

The school has not prioritised reading. A very high proportion of pupils struggle to read and a significant minority are in the early stages of reading. The school has failed to provide these pupils with support to help them to read fluently and confidently. It has only recently begun to assess how well pupils in key stage 3 can read. Reading remains a substantial factor to pupils' low achievement and a barrier to their success.

The school has recently implemented a new curriculum for personal, social and health education. In key stages 3 and 4, topics are ordered logically. However, in key stage 5, the curriculum is delivered in a disconnected way that does not help to build sixth-form students' understanding. The provision for careers is developing. Nevertheless, the school does not routinely monitor the destinations of pupils, so it is unaware of why a high proportion of them do not go on to further education, employment or training.

Some staff say that the school does not have a realistic understanding of their workload. Others say that leaders are disconnected from day-to-day life in the school. Staff report that they do not get the support and guidance that they need to fulfil their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school and trust do not have an accurate understanding of the deficiencies in the school's provision. As a result, they have not prioritised the right actions and have made little progress in improving key aspects of the school, such as pupils' behaviour and the quality of education. The school and trust must take decisive action to understand the root causes of the school's weaknesses and take the necessary action to address them at the pace required.
- The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are too low. Many lessons are interrupted because of poor pupil conduct and wilfully disruptive behaviour. This hinders pupils from learning what they should and contributed to many feeling unhappy in school. The school must raise its expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that staff are supported to use the behaviour management system consistently and fairly.
- For too many pupils, the use of offensive and derogatory language, including misogynistic terms, is commonplace. This makes many members of the school community, including pupils and staff, feel uncomfortable. The school must challenge such language and address pupils' lack of respect for others.
- The delivery of the curriculum is weak, including in key stage 5. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, do not achieve well. The school must ensure that staff develop the knowledge and expertise to design ambitious learning activities that match the aims of the curriculum. This will help to ensure that pupils are supported to apply their knowledge and consolidate their learning over time.
- Staff do not make effective checks on what pupils know and can do. Misconceptions are not addressed. This deepens the gaps in pupils' learning. In addition, staff do not use assessment information well enough to inform future learning. This means that some pupils move on too quickly to new content while others repeat learning that they have already secured. The school must ensure that staff have the guidance and support that they need to use assessment strategies to inform and adapt future learning.
- Staff do not make the adaptations needed to enable pupils with SEND in the main school to access the curriculum successfully. As a result, these pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school must ensure that staff raise their expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve and that staff are suitably equipped with the knowledge and expertise to support these pupils to learn.
- The school does not have rigorous systems in place to identify accurately the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. This means that pupils who struggle with reading do not receive support to help them to read fluently and confidently. These pupils struggle to access learning across the curriculum. The school must identify pupils' deficits in reading and put in place an appropriate programme of support, including phonics teaching where necessary, for those who need it.

- The school does not monitor or analyse pupils' patterns of attendance effectively. Too many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not attend school frequently. As such, nearly half of pupils are persistently absent from school and miss out on learning. The school must analyse attendance data rigorously and use it to strategically inform appropriate actions to support pupils to attend school more frequently.
- We strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136895
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10393821
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	836
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Murphy
Headteacher	Steve Fisher (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.oldershaw.wirral.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's executive headteacher and the senior leadership team have taken up their posts since the previous inspection.
- The school's sixth-form provision is due to close this academic year. The sixth form currently only has students in Year 13.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, on behalf of the local authority. The provision currently has 20 pupils.
- The school makes use of one registered and four unregistered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This is the second inspection since the pandemic. Inspectors discussed with the leaders the current context of the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- An inspector met with representatives of the trustee board, including the chair.
- An inspector held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to other subject leaders and visited a range of lessons across the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff. They also spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at transition times and at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including trustee meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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His Majesty's Inspector

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