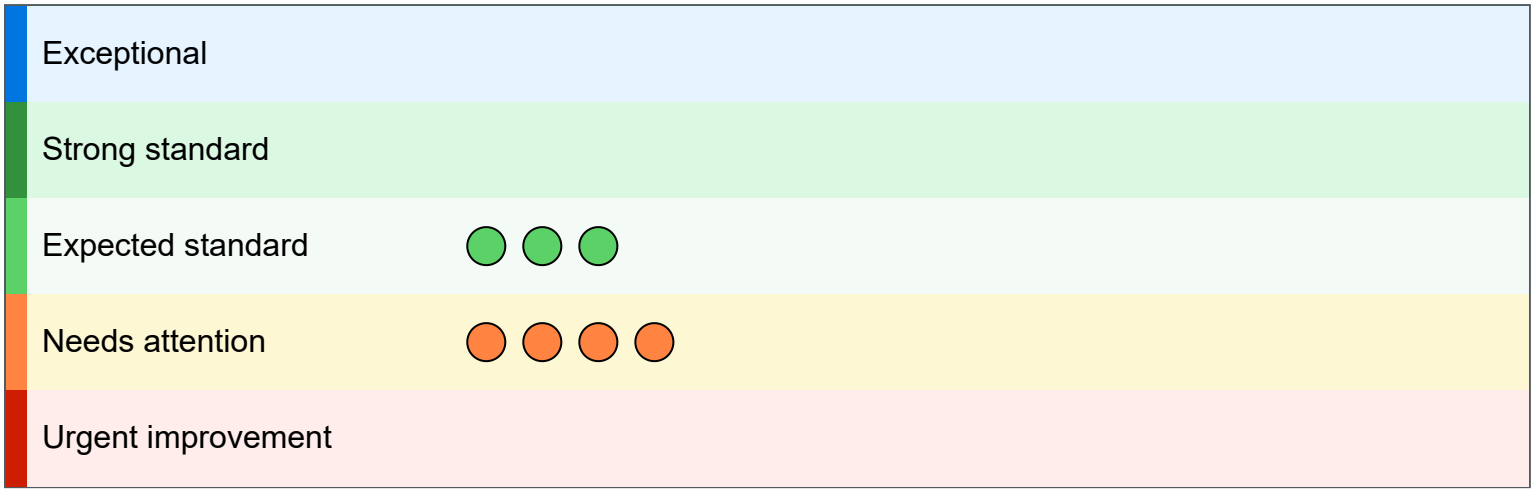
The Whitby High School

Address: Sycamore Drive, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH66 2NU

Unique reference number (URN): 111429

Inspection report: 23 June 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leadership at all levels, including governance, has been strengthened. Leaders' vision for improvement is clear. They have identified the right priorities and set out the appropriate steps to secure change. Leaders are unafraid to tackle underperformance. They are role models and set high expectations.

Rigorous quality assurance processes inform leaders of how successfully strategies are implemented and where staff need more support. This informs a well-structured programme of professional development. Those teachers at the earliest stages of their careers benefit from the high-quality training that they receive. Standards of behaviour have improved and the curriculum is more ambitious and sequenced to help pupils to build knowledge securely. Nevertheless, in some areas, such as pupils' attendance or achievement, it is too early to see the impact of leaders' actions.

Staff understand the rationale behind the work that they are asked to do. They appreciate that leaders consider their workload and wellbeing when making decisions and planning changes. Staff are supportive of the changes being made to improve the school.

In recent years, leaders have strengthened engagement with parents and carers. Attendance at parents' evenings has risen and most parents are positive about the recent changes in the school.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have redesigned the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education. It covers an appropriate range of information and also carefully considers contextual factors. A small team of specialist teachers deliver the programme effectively. As a result, pupils typically develop a secure body of knowledge. For instance, they speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe online, the dangers of drug misuse and the differences between debit and credit cards.

Pastoral support is effective in helping to support pupils with their wellbeing. This includes early intervention if a pupil is struggling with their mental health. Pupils learn strategies to improve their self-esteem.

The school's values of kindness, respect, commitment and inclusivity are woven through the personal development offer. Pupils learn how to speak kindly to one another. They understand the fundamental British values and speak out about discrimination. Pupils volunteer for different roles in school, such as acting as Year 7 buddies. They love to give their time and resources to support local charities.

Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are given the same opportunities as their peers. For example, a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend enrichment activities. This helps to grow these pupils' skills and talents.

The school has a comprehensive careers programme, suitably tailored to the needs of the local area. Pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from meaningful work experience. Leaders ensure that pupils who might struggle to access these opportunities are supported to participate. For example, leaders secure placements for these pupils with employers, who are experienced and confident in supporting them.

Pupils take pride in representing their peers through a range of leadership roles, such as ambassadors and student leaders. They contribute to decision-making and ensure the views of their peers are heard.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard

Leaders have successfully strengthened the sixth-form provision. The curriculum offer has been broadened to include a wider range of subjects. The sixth-form base has moved and been redesigned. Students appreciate the availability of quiet working spaces along with areas for group learning.

Leaders have made astute decisions about who teaches sixth form. These teachers have excellent subject knowledge that they use to explain information clearly and to engage students. They use assessment effectively and, as a result, adapt learning as necessary.

Students generally achieve well. There is an improving picture of attainment over time in national examinations. Students' work demonstrates their understanding and application of knowledge.

Students with additional needs are well supported. For example, guided study is used effectively to support pupils, who need help with organisation and to study independently. Other strategies of support, such as adapted timetables or check ins with pastoral leaders, also help these students.

The careers programme helps students to make informed decisions about their future. The 'employment readiness' programme supports those students who choose employment. Most students go on to appropriate destinations.

Most students play an active part in school life. For example, they volunteer as buddy readers with lower school pupils and lead inter-house events.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention

Due to low expectations of some pupils, variability in the quality of teaching and historic weaknesses in the curriculum, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. In key stage 4 examinations, pupils' outcomes are below national average. However, recently, disadvantaged pupils' attainment has improved as a result of leaders' actions to strengthen their pupil premium strategy.

In some subjects, pupils are learning better than they have in the past. They connect new learning with prior knowledge and develop a secure understanding. Nevertheless, the quality of pupils' work varies across the curriculum. This reflects some teachers' lower expectations of what pupils can achieve. In addition, leaders' strategies to improve teaching are not embedded.

Students in the sixth form achieve well. They develop secure bodies of knowledge and they articulate their understanding clearly. This is because students in the sixth form benefit from higher quality teaching.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention

Leaders have recently begun to tackle poor attendance with gusto. Their strategies to improve pupils' attendance are well considered but it is too soon to determine the impact of this work. Consequently, overall attendance rates remain too low and are not improving as quickly as they should.

Leaders have invested in resources to improve attendance. As such, there is a larger attendance team. Staff are beginning to see attendance as everyone's responsibility. There are some early signs that these actions are beginning to bear fruit. For example, leaders have successfully reduced the number of pupils arriving late each day. In addition, rates of persistent absenteeism have begun to decrease. Nonetheless, poor attendance has been an issue in the school over time. Too many pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities and some disadvantaged pupils, still do not attend school as often as they should.

Leaders have raised their expectations of pupils' behaviour. This has led to an increase in the number of suspensions as pupils learn to comply with leaders' higher standards. Clear routines and expectations have helped pupils to commit more fully to their studies. They typically behave well in lessons and learning is rarely disrupted.

Pupils mostly get along well with each other. Working alongside a group of pupils, leaders have recently established a 'stand up, speak out' campaign against bullying. Bullying is dealt with swiftly and has no place at The Whitby High School.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention

Leaders have taken effective action to improve the curriculum. A broad, ambitious and logically ordered curriculum is now in place. However, leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching are at an earlier stage. They have recently introduced 'The Whitby Way', which clearly sets out the expectations for how teachers should deliver the curriculum. Yet too much variability remains in how well teachers use these strategies. In addition, some teachers do not use assessment effectively enough to check, and respond to, pupils' learning. Teaching in the sixth form is of higher quality. Students benefit from clearer explanations and more effective use of assessment.

Teachers are beginning to use information about pupils' needs to inform their teaching. However, there is inconsistency in how effectively this is done. Consequently, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities struggle to access the curriculum and do

not achieve as well as they should. In addition, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what these pupils can achieve.

Leaders have accurately identified the gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge in reading, writing, numeracy and spelling. Leaders have successfully adjusted the mathematics curriculum to strengthen pupils' number knowledge. Those who struggle with reading receive appropriate support. Work to improve pupils' handwriting and extended writing is at an earlier stage.

Inclusion

Needs attention

Historically, the needs of too many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have not been met well enough. Leaders have started to tackle this. There are now clear processes in place to identify any additional needs that pupils may have. Leaders share useful information about these pupils with staff. While some staff are beginning to use this information well, there is considerable variability in how effectively strategies to reduce barriers to learning or wellbeing are implemented. As a result, support for these pupils is inconsistent.

Leaders have focused sharply on inclusion in recent years. New appointments have strengthened the team. Expectations of what disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can achieve are beginning to rise. Even so, a minority of staff continue to hold expectations that are not high enough. Leaders have improved communication with parents and carers and are working more collaboratively with them to support pupils.

Leaders have redesigned the pupil premium strategy. This is beginning to have some positive impact in some areas for disadvantaged pupils. For example, in 2025, disadvantaged pupils' attainment in national examinations at the end of key stage 4 was close to average. However, their attendance is still below national average.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

From the moment pupils enter the school site, they are greeted warmly by staff. Staff have increased their expectations about how pupils should behave and have made them explicit. Most pupils live up to these high expectations. They behave well at social times, enjoying the spaces where they can chat with their friends or play some sport.

At present, pupils have an uneven experience of teaching across the curriculum. They do not achieve as well as they should. In the sixth form, the standard of teaching is higher. Students typically make steady progress through the curriculum from their starting points and most achieve well.

Pupils' needs are identified more readily than they were in the past. Leaders have begun to equip staff with the expertise to reduce pupils' barriers to learning. That said, there are still some pupils whose needs are not met sufficiently well.

Pupils benefit from high-quality pastoral support. They feel safe in school. Staff deal with incidents of bullying effectively. Some pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not attend school regularly enough. This means that they are missing out on all that the school has to offer and gaps in their learning are not rectified.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment opportunities from art and photography to role-play games and dodgeball. They are keen to take up positions of leadership, for example ambassadors represent the school proudly. Pupils spoke excitedly about their part in the school's recent musical production. These experiences help to build their confidence. Pupils' understanding of the wider world is developed through international trips, for example to New York, Berlin and Paris.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed strategies to reduce any barriers to pupils' learning and wellbeing, so that their needs are met.
- Leaders should ensure that the strategies for improving attendance are fully embedded and have the intended impact in raising attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment effectively to check pupils' understanding and to adapt learning as necessary.
- Leaders should embed their strategies to help pupils to secure foundational knowledge, particularly in writing, so that any gaps in this important learning are addressed swiftly.
- Leaders should continue to embed the recently revised curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education so that, over time, pupils develop secure and detailed knowledge of this important learning.

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Angela Claydon.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.

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 school:

The school currently makes use of 7 unregistered alternative provisions.

Headteacher : Geraldine Fraser

Lead inspector:
Jenny Jones, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Timothy Gartside, Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Gill, Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Jardine, Ofsted Inspector
Erin Wheeler, Ofsted Inspector
Katie Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,477
Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,625
Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

28.19%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.23%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.41%
Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	31.0%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	27.8%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	26.0%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	38.9	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	38.4	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	38.2	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.58	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.70	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	20.3%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	7.4%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	11.8%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	31.6	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.0	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	31.4	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-1.10	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-1.24	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	20.3%	53.1%	-32.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	7.4%	53.1%	-45.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	11.8%	52.4%	-40.7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	31.6	50.4	-18.8
2023/24 (final)	28.0	50.0	-22.0
2022/23 (final)	31.4	50.3	-18.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-1.10	0.16	-1.26
2022/23 (final)	-1.24	0.17	-1.41

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	92%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	92%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	30.10	35.00	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.79	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	25.43	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.5	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	11.1%	8.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.5%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.4%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	30.5%	23.4%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	35.9%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.2%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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