

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: William Hulme's Grammar School

Spring Bridge Road, Manchester M16 8PR

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 June 2025

## Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The principal of this school is Kate Heaton. This school is part of United Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sir Jon Coles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Christian Brodie.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this diverse and welcoming school. From the youngest child to the oldest student, pupils feel a true sense of belonging to this special community. Individuals are valued and nurtured. Differences are celebrated. Culture days allow for colourful celebrations of pupils' heritages.

Highly structured routines alongside clearly communicated expectations, help pupils to behave in an exemplary fashion. Pupils' understanding of, and adherence to, the school's three charters of 'ambition, respect and compassion' creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Moreover, the school builds pupils' character and helps them to be the best that they can be. For instance, 'care monitors' look out for pupils who may be upset or in need of some friendly support. This typifies the caring culture of this school.

The school has high expectations for all. There is no limit put on what pupils can achieve. Most pupils achieve highly. The meticulously constructed personal development programme helps pupils to flourish. They are exposed to an abundance of opportunities, that build through each phase of their education, to widen their experiences. For example, in the early years, children watch a live performance. In key stage 2, pupils perform in front of an audience. This helps to build their confidence. All pupils have leadership opportunities from lunch monitor to leading Friday prayers.

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

Pupils benefit from a well-organised and ambitious curriculum. The number of pupils opting to study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing. Teachers have strong subject expertise. They know the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers explain and deliver new concepts with clarity. They choose activities, such as focused discussion tasks, that are designed to help pupils deepen their understanding. The school has equipped teachers with the skills to adeptly check that pupils have understood what they have been taught. Consequently, teachers identify and rectify any misconceptions swiftly. Over time, pupils have a strong recall of their learning. In all phases, pupils build a deep and rich body of knowledge that helps them to achieve well.

The school has effective processes in place to identify and meet the needs of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Learning is appropriately adapted when needed. Pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, learn successfully across the curriculum.

Reading is viewed as the gateway to knowledge. Staff expertly deliver the phonics programme so that pupils quickly learn to read fluently and with confidence. The small number of pupils who find reading more challenging are given effective support that helps them to catch up. Pupils are exposed to an exciting range of texts. They enjoy spending time in the school's library. This fosters a love of reading.

Children in the early years quickly settle into the school and learn to follow the school's routines. They listen attentively to staff and to each other. Children learn to wait patiently for their turn when playing games. They share well. The school encourages children's curiosity through well-designed activities. Children get off to a flying start and learn exceptionally well.

Pupils interact warmly and respectfully with staff and visitors. They are confident and articulate. Older pupils are thoughtful and considered in their responses to questions. Sixth-form students value the personalised support that they receive from their teachers. Pupils are resoundingly positive about the education that they receive.

The school has the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour. In classrooms, learning takes place uninterrupted. Pupils are engaged in their learning. Pupils are polite and respectful. They greet staff with a smile. Pupils benefit from highly personalised pastoral care, which helps add to their sense of belonging.

The school's approach to preparing pupils for their future is exceptional. In every phase, opportunities to engage with different careers are threaded through the curriculum. Pupils are furnished with the knowledge they need to make informed choices about their next steps.

The school caters for a wide range of interests, such as, Arabic drumming, table tennis and maths problem solving. Pupils benefit from a broad range of leadership roles such as 'eco representatives', subject ambassadors, or being members of the social action group

and executive council. Responsibilities attached to these roles progress as pupils move through the school. Selection for these positions varies with some requiring a more formal interview process.

In the last two years, there have been significant changes in the school. With dynamic leadership and support from the trust, the school has been on a journey of improvement. Governors are highly skilled and use their expertise to hold the school to account successfully. The school, the trust and those responsible for governance share the same ambitious vision which has the pupils at its centre.

There is effective collaboration between the primary and secondary phases. Staff enjoy learning from each other's expertise. Coherence in the curriculum, from the early years to sixth form, has been enhanced. Staff are committed to the school and pupils. They benefit from a well-organised professional development programme. The school takes staff well-being into account. It has put actions in place to support with workload.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135296
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10348253
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1589
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Christian Brodie
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Sir Jon Coles
<b>Principal</b>	Kate Heaton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.whgs-academy.org">www.whgs-academy.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of United Learning Trust.
- The current principal, head of primary and head of secondary were appointed in September 2023.
- The school is registered to host a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority for 12 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. The provision currently has 14 pupils.
- The school makes use of two registered alternative provisions.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with trust staff including the CEO's representative and directors of education.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the trust board and local governing body.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, transitions and social times.
- 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 shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

## Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Burke-Jackson

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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