

Chorley Astley Park School

Harrington Road, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 1JZ

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- This school lives up to its motto, 'Nurturing Futures'. This accurately sums up what Astley Park School achieves. There is an ethos and atmosphere that enables pupils to thrive and become as independent as they possibly can.
- Leaders have established a culture of learning and self-improvement. Staff share their expertise, which has resulted in a highly skilled and knowledgeable staff team. They understand the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of each pupil and know how to support each one through every stage of development. The school is ready to share this outstanding practice with other schools.
- The highly effective assessment system allows pupils' small steps of progress to be captured and shared with parents and carers each week.
- The school's high-quality curriculum is the foundation that supports pupils to develop the skills necessary to become independent, confident young people ready for the next step in life.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan meticulously so that every pupil is supported and challenged to be the best they can possibly be. Learning is highly personalised, and pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils are exceptionally well supported by a range of interventions designed to meet their sensory, emotional, personal and physical needs. This support is tailored to meet the specific needs of each pupil and is a valuable part of the curriculum.
- Staff know the needs of each pupil very well, and as a result behaviour within the school is exceptional. Every pupil is treated and respected as an individual, and staff are quick to support a pupil when necessary.
- Parents speak highly of the school and the support provided for them. They value the information they receive on their child's progress, and all who responded to Ofsted's parental questionnaire would recommend Astley Park School to other parents.
- Governors are highly committed and know the school inside out. They are passionate and skilled in their roles and are continually striving for excellence.
- The school works very effectively with post-16 providers, pupils and parents to plan and support the move to further education. For the past three years, all leavers have settled well into their chosen provision.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the reach of the school so that its outstanding practice is shared with other schools, which it, in turn, learns from.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher places great value on his staff and supports them to excel. Strong leadership at all levels supports a culture of learning that permeates the school. Staff share their considerable skills and knowledge with each other, which has a very positive impact on pupils' progress.
- The school prides itself on providing pupils with excellent preparation for their next stage in life. The school's highly nurturing environment gives pupils the confidence and self-esteem to shine. The development of independence and life skills is threaded throughout school life. Staff put great emphasis on giving pupils a voice. Pupils are able to communicate their needs, wishes, thoughts and feelings using a variety of methods, including speech, signing and visual symbols.
- Fostering independence and developing life skills across all key stages provide the clear rationale for the curriculum. Teachers have the flexibility to plan activities both in school and out in the community. Learning is strengthened through real-life experiences such as visiting a café to practise ordering food and working out how much it will cost. Visits to the local sports centre not only improve swimming and physical skills but also allow pupils to develop and improve their social skills.
- Reading, writing and number skills are embedded throughout the curriculum from Reception to Year 11. Pupils across all age groups are taught to use phonics, and some pupils become avid readers. They happily talked to inspectors about the books they enjoy reading.
- Topics are carefully mapped out across all age groups to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to cover the full range of subjects, including humanities, sports, sciences, languages and the arts. Teachers carefully plan learning to respond to the individual needs of the pupils.
- The broader curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoyed visiting a local Buddhist temple and participated in a coffee morning at the local Methodist church. Parents commented on the positive experiences their children had. One summarised the views of many others in saying, 'My child has had so many positive experiences, with regular excursions and visits in the community. Her self-esteem has improved.'
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding for primary schools is used very well. Leaders have expanded the range of physical activities. All pupils have experienced at least three new activities, such as archery, judo and balance bikes. Staff have worked alongside experienced sports coaches, which has improved the quality of PE provision across the school. Inspectors observed a PE lesson in which pupils were able to explain their learning by confidently and accurately using technical language.
- New members of staff appreciate the induction procedures, which help them to feel fully supported in their new roles. Staff value the continuing professional development provided because it has had a positive impact on their own skills and knowledge, and consequently on the pupils' learning.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the support and

help that the school offers and the information they receive on the academic and personal progress of their child. All parents agreed that their children are safe and well looked after in school. One comment typified the thoughts of many: 'Fantastic school, always incredibly supportive to parents as well as children. Staff go above and beyond. Couldn't think of a better school.'

Governance of the school

- Governors have an impressively accurate understanding of the school's significant strengths. They work very effectively alongside senior leaders to provide clear strategic direction. They rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of actions on improving outcomes for pupils so that they can be sure that the school is providing its pupils with the best possible educational experiences.
- Governors are skilled and experienced in their roles. They know the school very well. As well as fulfilling their strategic roles and responsibilities to excellent effect, governors enjoy being part of the school community. They take a full and active part in extra-curricular and social events such as the school disco.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective. The work that the school undertakes to keep all its pupils safe is of a very high standard. The designated safeguarding lead is tenacious in following up referrals and ensuring that families are well supported. She engages very effectively with parents on safeguarding issues.
- The safeguarding protocols and practices for record-keeping, including those related to the recruitment of suitable staff, are robust. Leaders ensure that all staff training is up to date and staff know precisely what to do should they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare.
- The governor with responsibility for safeguarding meets regularly with the school's safeguarding team. Leaders are happy to seek external verification to confirm their judgements about the strength of safeguarding practice in the school, and a recent audit confirmed leaders' evaluation that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. This aptly illustrates leaders' rigorous approach to keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Because staff have taken the time to get to know every pupil when they join the school, they understand each pupil's needs extremely well. The education, health and care plans are used very effectively alongside other information to set small, measurable targets for each pupil.
- Classrooms are bright, well resourced and very well suited to the sensory, physical and learning needs of each pupil. Pupils' targets are clear to see on each classroom wall. Teachers use visual images as well as words to help pupils understand their own targets.
- Teaching is highly personalised and tasks are closely matched to the specific needs of each pupil. Teachers have high expectations and are skilled in planning activities to meet a wide range of needs within one class. Teaching is creative and inspirational,

and as a result pupils are engaged and thoroughly enjoy their learning.

- The school's assessment system is highly effective and allows the very small steps of progress that pupils make to be recorded on a daily basis. Staff share this progress information with parents on a weekly basis. Parents greatly appreciate these timely updates and the information about their children's learning that they receive.
- All staff have expert knowledge of SEND and child development, which they apply skilfully within the classroom. Teaching assistants know how to support each pupil and can talk confidently about their progress and plans for the next steps in learning.
- The school's own speech and language therapist assesses each pupil and produces a sensory communication profile. This information enables staff successfully to plan and use specific language and strategies to support and improve each pupil's communication, speech and language skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- This is a happy school. There is a genuine warmth between the pupils and staff. Relationships are strong and there is a shared sense of humour that is evident across all areas of the school.
- The school has embedded a system to help pupils understand how they feel and communicate this information to staff. This is a valuable part of the school's daily routine. On entry to their classroom first thing in the morning, pupils use the system to show whether they are feeling 'ready to learn'. A similar system is used consistently across the school. For example, in one class a pupil let the teacher know she was anxious about learning how to throw a ball using a chest throw. When she had completed the throw, she ran over and quickly changed her colour to 'green' without any prompting. This informed the teacher that she was ready to move to the next step of learning.
- Learning through real-life experiences contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development by enabling them to gain the skills and confidence needed to tackle new situations. Evidence in pupils' learning records shows examples of how they have practised asking for shoes in their correct size both in class and at the local bowling alley. The same pupils are now using their skills to plan how to order food at a café that they plan to visit.
- The older pupils learn to travel independently. Through careful planning to develop the necessary skills and confidence, pupils are able to walk to the local sports centre. The most able pupils are taught how to use public transport. For many pupils, this represents a significant and important achievement.
- Across the school, the mutual respect that pupils have for one another and for staff shines through. During the inspection, at lunchtime some pupils used sign language to announce the day's menu. Other pupils joined in supportively so that everyone in the dining room was signing together. This was followed by a spontaneous round of

applause.

- Pupils routinely evaluate their own learning and also give each other feedback at the end of a lesson. Pupils have learned the personal skills needed to receive praise as well as to feed back on how to improve.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and explained that they know who to turn to if they are uncomfortable about anything they see online. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that bullying rarely happens. If it does, staff deal with it promptly and effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The staff have a deep understanding of the circumstances that contribute to each pupil's behaviour and they use a range of appropriate strategies to help them.
- The intervention team has a full timetable of support, including counselling, social skills, communication, emotional resilience and trampolining. The interventions are an integral part of the curriculum and make a valuable contribution to pupils' development and well-being. Each pupil referred for intervention has bespoke support for behaviour, social, emotional, sensory or physical needs. Because of this highly effective, targeted support, pupils' needs are being met and behaviour around the school is impeccable.
- During a lunchtime intervention, pupils with autism spectrum disorder had their sensory needs met through carefully planned and skilfully delivered activities. This allowed them to return to their afternoon classes calm, relaxed and ready to learn.
- Pupils' attendance is above the average for similar schools nationally. Staff provide a range of appropriate support for any pupils whose medical or complex needs may be adversely affecting their attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The school's own detailed assessment system and pupils' learning records show that, throughout their time in school, pupils make outstanding progress, often from very low starting points. Helpfully, pupils' progress is measured not only in academic terms but importantly across their personal, social, physical and emotional development.
- The school's own progress data shows that the great majority of pupils achieve the challenging targets set for them in reading, writing and mathematics. A good number also exceed expectations in these subjects.
- For the past three years, pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 11 have all moved into post-16 provision that meets their needs and aspirations. The high-quality, personalised support provided to pupils and parents helps to make the transition to college seamless.
- The school offers an appropriate range of opportunities for key stage 4 pupils to gain accreditation, including in English, mathematics and science. In addition, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and courses in personal effectiveness enhance pupils' achievements. The majority of Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018 at least

achieved their expected outcomes.

- For the most able pupils, the school has links to a mainstream school where pupils have been able to study and gain GCSEs. This illustrates leaders' ambitions for every pupil to fulfil their individual potential.
- All groups of pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders identified that communication was a barrier to learning and have used the pupil premium funding very effectively to help overcome this. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as, and in some cases better than, other pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	119877
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10057978

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Blundell
Headteacher	Kieran Welsh
Telephone number	01257 262227
Website	www.astleypark.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@astleypark.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2018

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in the majority of classes. All observations on day one of the inspection were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out work and progress scrutinies with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally throughout the inspection. They also met formally with one group of pupils. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders. A meeting was held with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' survey. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally and formally.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and development plan, information about pupils' progress and outcomes, education, health and care plans, and a range of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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