

# Halton School

31 Main Street, Halton, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2AN

## Inspection dates

1 July 2021

## Overall outcome

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

### Part 1. Quality of education provided

*Paragraph 2(1)-2(2)(b), 2(2)(d)-2(2)(e)(iii), 2(2)(h)-2(2)(i), 3-3(j), 4*

- The school's curriculum policy provides a clear framework for pupils' education. It commits the school to provide the breadth of curriculum required by the independent school standards (standards).
- The detail of the curriculum is set out in schemes of work for the different subjects offered. Some of these, for example in mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE), are based on programmes provided by specialist organisations external to the school.
- Teachers and education support workers know pupils and their needs very well. Staff ensure that they teach the curriculum in a way that helps pupils to engage with their learning. When needed, staff provide additional help and support. Leaders have recently included 'intervention' sessions for pupils. These allow staff to have a sharp focus on weaker aspects of each pupil's learning, for example their phonics knowledge.
- Teachers ensure that much of the learning they provide involves pupils being active. Pupils are frequently provided with opportunities to learn off the school site. This includes physical education, for example swimming and trampolining. Some activities, particularly where these would involve pupils going indoors at other settings, have recently been restricted to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19 (coronavirus).
- Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy learning, at least most of the time. Some explained how they were successfully learning much more at this school than they had in the past.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' learning. Where possible, leaders match the curriculum to unit award accreditation from a national examination board. Older pupils are able to complete formal accreditation, including GCSEs in English and mathematics.
- The PSHE programme includes careers education. This builds from developing younger pupils' awareness of different jobs to developing older pupils' employability

skills. When appropriate, leaders organise work experience placements to contribute to pupils' transition out of the school. Leaders work with experts from the local authority to ensure that such placements are safe and properly monitored.

- Leaders place a high importance on ensuring that different members of the small team of staff have a wide range of subject teaching experience. They want staff to be confident to contribute to curriculum development and to be able to support other colleagues. Leaders consider this when appointing new members of staff.
- The standards in this part are met.

## Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

### *Paragraph 5-5(d)(iii)*

- The school's PSHE curriculum provides pupils with frequent opportunities to consider issues such as the difference between right and wrong, tolerance, and respect for self and each other.
- Staff model positive and respectful behaviours through their careful and patient support of pupils.
- Leaders arrange for pupils to meet people from the wider society and its institutions, for example police and fire officers. This work has been reduced since the middle of the last school year because of COVID-19.
- Leaders have considered the most recent government guidance about relationships and sex education (RSE) and how to reflect this in the school's curriculum. Leaders are aware of the need to be very sensitive in delivering RSE to pupils who may have had traumatic experiences in the past.
- The standards in this part are met.

## Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

### *Paragraph 7-7(b), 32(1)(c)*

- A suitably detailed safeguarding policy is published on the school's pages of the proprietor's website. This policy reflects the most recent government guidance. Leaders have prepared a separate document that sets out additional information about how pupils can be safeguarded during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Leaders provide regular training for all staff about safeguarding. Staff are confident in knowing what to do should they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. If any significant concerns arise, these are reported to, and followed up in partnership with, the local authority.
- Leaders look for ways to improve safeguarding in the school. For example, the headteacher has arranged for the local authority's expert on safeguarding in schools to review the school's practice and procedures later this term.

### *Paragraph 9-16(b)*

- Leaders have prepared a comprehensive set of policies about the school's approach to pupils' welfare, health and safety. These are based on model policies provided by the

proprietor body, but adapted by leaders to make them relevant to this school. These policies cover, but are not restricted to, the aspects required by the standards.

- The behaviour policy emphasises the need for positive reinforcement of good behaviour. Pupils said that staff manage their behaviour in a fair and positive way. All staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical intervention in response to instances when a pupil's behaviour puts themselves or others at risk. The school's careful records on behaviour incidents show that the use of physical interventions has reduced over the last two years. Pupils recognise that they, and others, may sometimes find it hard to control their behaviour and that this can affect everyone. However, those pupils who talked to the inspector said that bullying does not happen.
- Leaders arrange for regular checks on fire and electrical safety to be completed by suitably qualified contractors. During this inspection, leaders arranged for some obstacles to be removed from a fire exit route and made sure that some escape route signage was clear.
- Leaders have completed risk assessments that consider a suitably wide range of activities and situations. In addition, staff think carefully about risks that could affect individual pupils, depending on the time and circumstances. Such assessments form part of the school's planning to ensure that pupils' needs are met.
- Staffing levels are very high. Pupils are closely supervised at all times while they are at school.
- Leaders keep the school's attendance and admissions registers as electronic documents. These include suitable detail.
- The standards in this part are met.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

*Paragraph 18(1)-18(2)(e), 18(3), 19(2)-19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3), 20(6)-20(6)(c), 21(1)-21(3)(b), 21(5)-21(6)*

- Leaders working centrally for the proprietor body and in the school ensure that the school's record of pre-employment checks on staff is complete. At least one person involved in any appointments of new members of staff has completed training on how pupils can be safeguarded throughout this process.
- The school establishes the suitability of any temporary members of staff before they are allowed to work with pupils.
- The standards in this part are met.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

*Paragraph 34(1)-34(1)(c)*

- Leaders know about the standards. Following some small improvements during the inspection, leaders ensured that the standards were met.
- A sub-group of the directors of Keys Group Limited, together with the managing director of the group's education division, form the proprietor body. This proprietor

body is extended by other professionals from within the group to form a governing body. The headteacher and the group's regional manager have frequent contact to discuss the school's operation.

- The proprietor body has clear systems for monitoring key information about the school's performance. In addition, the headteacher provides helpful updates about wider aspects of the school's performance to governors. Members of the proprietor body and governors challenge school leaders if they identify any concerns, for example about the reasons for increases in recorded instances of poor behaviour. Plans are in place to guide the school's improvement.
- The standards in this part are met.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	133485
DfE registration number	876/6000
Inspection number	10192664

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent special day school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	12
Proprietor	Keys Group Limited
Chair	Nicola Kelly
Headteacher	Hayley Cunningham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000 to £47,000
Telephone number	01928 589810
Website	<a href="https://education.keys-group.co.uk/school/halton-school/">https://education.keys-group.co.uk/school/halton-school/</a>
Email address	hayley.cunningham@keys-group.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	6–8 March 2018

## Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has premises on two sites. These are about two miles apart from each other.
- The current headteacher joined the school in November 2019.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There are currently no pupils of sixth-form age.
- The school's last standard inspection was in March 2018.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education following concerns about safeguarding at other provisions operated by Keys Group Limited and the quality of education at other schools operated by the group.
- Emergency inspections are normally carried out without prior notice to the school. The school received 30 minutes notice of this inspection to allow the inspector to check that arrangements could be made in line with current government guidance about COVID-19.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, another leader and a representative of the proprietor body in order to discuss the school's compliance with the standards checked in this inspection. He spoke with staff and pupils.
- As part of preparing for the inspection, the inspector had telephone conversations with an officer from Halton Borough Council, who considers safeguarding in schools, and another officer responsible for safeguarding employed by the local authority. The inspector toured both of the school's sites accompanied by the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised policies and other documents, for example about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the curriculum. He looked at a small sample of pupils' written work.

## Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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