

Inspection of Brambles School

29 Ashworth Lane, Mottram, Cheshire SK14 6NT

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish during their time at this caring and happy school. They are full of smiles as they are greeted warmly by staff each morning. Pupils benefit from the nurturing and fun relationships they have with staff. They feel safe and secure from the moment they start at the school.

Pupils achieve well. This is because leaders are determined that all pupils will succeed in both learning more and remembering more. Pupils benefit from the wide-ranging support that they receive from staff. This support ensures that pupils learn well. Pupils are successfully prepared for their next steps.

Pupils learn how to manage their emotions and behaviour as they settle into school. Over time, pupils concentrate more in lessons and form friendships.

Pupils know how to share any concerns that they have with staff. They understand that their teachers are there to listen and to help. Pupils know that staff are quick to address any misbehaviour and are ready to take action should bullying occur.

Pupils are encouraged to stay fit and healthy. They talk excitedly about taking part in regular activities such as trampolining, cycling and swimming lessons.

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

Pupils arrive at the school with significant emotional and behavioural needs. These special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully considered by leaders and staff in their curriculum plans and teaching. Pupils learn in well-decorated and resourced classrooms. There is an outdoor area for pupils to learn and play in.

Leaders have planned a broad and balanced curriculum that develops pupils' skills and knowledge across a range of subjects. During their time at the school, pupils make up for some of their lost learning. Most make a successful return to mainstream schools.

Across subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they intend pupils to learn and remember. For example, in mathematics, teachers focus deeply on developing pupils' knowledge of number, including place value. The school's curriculum plans ensure that pupils' learning takes place in a logical order. Leaders have taken recent steps to strengthen the ordering of the curriculum in subjects other than mathematics and English.

Leaders place reading at the heart of the school's curriculum. Staff benefit from training to ensure that they are experts in teaching phonics. When pupils join the school, staff make detailed checks to identify exactly what help pupils need in order to become fluent readers. Leaders have invested in books that are carefully matched

to pupils' reading ability. Staff share a wide range of books with pupils and help them appreciate reading for pleasure.

Teachers' checks of pupils' knowledge across different subjects are detailed. Teachers use this information to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know. Leaders have taken recent steps to ensure that these checks are matched to the revised curriculum plans in these subjects. These changes are not fully embedded.

In most subjects, teachers think carefully about what activities will help pupils to remember more of the curriculum. For example, in art and design, pupils develop their drawing expertise by practising regularly. They deepen their knowledge in carefully planned steps. However, in some subjects, activities that teachers plan are less carefully considered. Where this is the case, pupils do not extend their knowledge.

Pupils have regular opportunities to develop personally. For example, pupils learn about different cultures and religions. Staff help pupils to understand how to be active and caring citizens. Pupils enjoy organising charitable events and keep in contact with residents from a local care home.

Leaders give careful thought to developing pupils' confidence and well-being. For example, pupils write the annual school pantomime and perform in it. Staff take every opportunity to allow pupils to share their feelings and worries, such as when visiting the school's calm room for a chat.

Staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. They do so in a caring and supportive way. The school's range of professionals ensures that well-trained staff know precisely how to address incidents of misbehaviour. Where these do occur, staff act to enable pupils to return to their learning quickly.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. Leaders take account of staff well-being when making decisions. Staff work collaboratively to share their expertise.

Governors keep a careful and detailed check on the provision for pupils. They have detailed knowledge of the progress that pupils make, both academically and socially. They use this information to provide appropriate challenge and support for leaders in the school.

The proprietor has a detailed understanding of the independent school standards (the standards). They fulfil their statutory duties and ensure that the school is a safe place. Detailed information about the school is available on the school's website. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest government guidance and is published on the school's website.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular safeguarding training. This means that staff are very alert to possible signs of abuse. They report any concerns to leaders.

Leaders follow the latest government guidance when recruiting staff or dealing with any safeguarding concerns. Leaders work closely with external agencies to protect pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils get comprehensive support from the school's clinicians.

Through the curriculum, pupils find out about situations that may lead to harm, including online. Pupils know that they should share any concerns with a trusted adult. They learn what steps to take when they feel unsafe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In subjects other than mathematics and English, leaders have taken recent steps to strengthen further the sequencing of curriculum plans. Previous plans lacked precise details about how teachers should best adapt the curriculum to reflect pupils' varied starting points when joining the school. Leaders should ensure that the improved curriculum plans are used by teachers to plan work that builds precisely on pupils' existing knowledge.
- In subjects other than mathematics and English, leaders have revised assessment systems to check how well pupils are learning. The changes are recent and not fully embedded. Leaders should ensure that these revisions are fully implemented and used to identify any support that pupils need with their learning.
- In some subjects, the ambition of the curriculum plans is not fully realised in the implementation of the curriculum. This is when activities do not fully support pupils in deepening their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers plan activities that enable pupils to practise and further extend their learning.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	140814
DfE registration number	357/6004
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10203837
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Halliwell Homes
Chair of governing body	Mathew Hargreaves
Headteacher	Pat Rice
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,250
Telephone number	01457 764658
Website	www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/education
Email address	Mathew.hargreaves@halliwellhomes.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 December 2017

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place in December 2017.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. At the time of the inspection, the school was being led by two headteachers who also lead other schools for Halliwell Homes.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The school meets the standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders in school, a member of the proprietor body, a governor and a range of staff members. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their work and school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors observed a pupil reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors looked at other subjects in less depth, such as art and design, history and science. In these subjects, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans and at pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that around the standards. Inspectors looked at arrangements for safeguarding. They spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors reviewed the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders and pupils to discuss provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and attendance. Inspectors looked at documentation associated with these areas.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Stevens, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Zarina Connolly

Ofsted Inspector

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