

Inspection of a good school: High Well School

Rookhill Road, Pontefract WF8 2DD

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 September 2022

Outcome

High Well School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Preparing pupils for positive futures is at the heart of High Well School. Leaders ensure that staff have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils are taught well by dedicated and knowledgeable staff. They also benefit from the support of members of staff who help them learn to manage their behaviour. Pupils and staff get along well.

All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are supported with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Pupils learn an appropriate curriculum relevant to their needs. Staff have ambition for pupils. Books are an important part of school life. Pupils are taught effectively how to improve their reading. The 'preparing for positive futures' curriculum provides pupils with well-thought-out opportunities to learn about the world around them and how to keep safe.

Most pupils who spoke to inspectors said that bullying is not an issue. If bullying were to happen, it is dealt with effectively by staff. Pupils also value having an adult in school who they can speak to if they have any concerns or are worried.

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

The curriculum is mostly well planned and follows the national curriculum. In some subjects, there are instances where planning of content lacks clarity about what is to be learned and when. Connections between subjects are not always considered. This results in content being taught out of sequence across subjects. For example, in some science lessons, pupils are taught mathematical concepts before being taught them in maths lessons.

Provision for supporting pupils' needs is well led by the special educational needs coordinator. Teachers are provided with detailed information that enables them to support pupils well. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have ensured reading and learning to read are prioritised. Staff spend a great deal of time preparing pupils for their individual next steps in school and future education. The preparing for positive futures curriculum is

an important part of school life. It includes important learning about fundamental British values and protected characteristics. However, many pupils do not have a secure knowledge of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. The religious education curriculum has been redeveloped to address this but needs time to embed. Some pupils struggle to engage with these lessons and use derogatory language about people who are different to them.

Pupils' behaviour around school is good. If pupils' behaviour does not meet leaders' high expectations, it is effectively managed by staff. Staff use physical intervention if pupils become dysregulated, although it is used as a last resort. Leaders' effective strategies to support pupils in managing their behaviour mean that instances of physical intervention are reducing over time.

Changes in school governance have now stabilised. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. In partnership with governors, the school's leaders have developed strategic plans for the future. Plans include significant development of the school building.

Pupils develop responsibility by caring for exotic animals, including a pet snake. Those who spoke to inspectors were very proud and articulate about the role that they play in its care. Leaders carefully select alternative provision for some pupils to ensure that they engage and succeed. Pupils attend these placements to study courses unavailable to the regular curriculum offer. They include courses in engineering and mechanics. While attending these placements, pupils remain in leaders' sights with daily attendance and safeguarding checks.

Staff speak with enthusiasm about their work. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school's leaders. Staff appreciate the training they receive to be effective in their roles. They did not report workload as an issue, stating they are given time to prepare lessons and complete administrative work. Staff highlighted that they welcomed support from leaders, particularly with matters of well-being and the cost of living.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The systems and processes to support safeguarding are robust. Procedures to check adults before their employment are rigorous. Record-keeping is detailed and safeguarding referrals are reported quickly. Safeguarding leaders challenge external agencies to ensure that decision-making is in pupils' best interests. Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities through regular training. Leaders have ensured that staff understand the relationship between safeguarding and pupils' vulnerabilities.

Pupils that spoke to inspectors say that they feel safe in school. Daily arrangements for keeping pupils safe who attend alternative provision are secure.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum planning does not have the clarity and connections between subjects that details what knowledge is to be learned and when. This means some pupils are asked to apply content from another subject area that they have not yet been taught. Leaders should ensure wider curriculum planning clearly identifies the important knowledge pupils will learn and when, ensuring connections are made so that pupils can apply knowledge from one subject area to another.
- Many pupils do not have a secure knowledge of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. In some lessons, pupils use derogatory language about people who are different to them. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of tolerance and respect for those who are different to them.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in May 2017.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	131526
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10240717
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Turner
Headteacher	Louise Quinn
Website	www.highwellschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- High Well School is a special school for pupils aged between 10 and 16 years. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses a classroom for key stage 2 pupils at Cherry Tree Academy, Pontefract.
- Some year 11 pupils are taught at St. Mary's Community Centre, Pontefract.
- The school makes provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, speech language and communication needs, autism spectrum disorder, and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school uses three alternative provision providers. Two of the providers are unregistered.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers and some non-teaching staff.
- The lead inspector visited the additional provision based at Cherry Tree Academy and St. Mary's Community Centre, Pontefract.
- The lead inspector met with members of the school's governing body.
- The lead inspector met with the local authority school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and science. Here, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The provision for teaching reading was also closely scrutinised.
- The lead inspector met with each school's designated safeguarding leader. The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding records, relevant policies and other safeguarding documentation. The inspector also reviewed the processes leaders use to identify and help pupils who need support. In addition, the inspector scrutinised the school's records of checks carried out on adults who work at the school.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the school sites, as well as activities at the start of the day.
- An inspector held telephone conversations with representatives from three alternative provisions used by the school.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally, including pupils who receive support to improve their reading.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and their workload in the school.
- The responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents were also considered.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Thorp

His Majesty's Inspector

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