

Inspection of Hallwood Park Primary School and Nursery

Hallwood Park Avenue, Hallwood Park, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2FL

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education at Hallwood Park Primary School. Leadership is not effective. Governors have been too slow to intervene to remedy the weaknesses in the school. As a result, pupils' learning is poor. They do not achieve well.

Pupils do not benefit from an ambitious and engaging curriculum. Leaders and staff have low expectations of what pupils, including children in the early years, can, and should, achieve. The majority of pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the next stage of their education. Moreover, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and the youngest children, are worst affected by the ineffective curriculum.

While most leaders and staff expect pupils to behave well, pupils' attitudes to learning vary. Although some pupils told inspectors that they enjoy learning, other pupils find the curriculum dull and uninspiring. These pupils often lack the desire to try hard and do their best.

Pupils have limited opportunities to take part in activities beyond the academic curriculum. Leaders have failed to reintroduce a wide range of enrichment activities following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pupils benefit from warm and caring relationships with staff. Pupils are confident that leaders and staff will listen to their worries and concerns. Staff quickly resolve any incidents of bullying. As a result, most pupils feel happy and safe.

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

Leaders have failed to design a well-thought-out curriculum, including in the early years. Across the school, the curriculum lacks depth and substance. For example, in key stages 1 and 2, pupils do not study all aspects of the national curriculum subjects. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn a deep body of subject knowledge as they progress through the school.

Many leaders have not had the opportunity to develop their subject curriculums. Subject leaders have not had sufficient direction from senior leaders, including governors. Due to the turbulence in staffing, leaders have been unable to realise their vision for the curriculum. Consequently, pupils get a poor deal.

Subject leaders do not have strong enough subject knowledge to support teachers and other adults to design and deliver a curriculum effectively. Consequently, staff are unclear about the key concepts and vocabulary that children and pupils must learn. Staff flounder. Too often, pupils experience disconnected lessons which lack coherence. As a result, pupils do not learn consistently well.

For the most part, assessment strategies are either non-existent or ineffective. Subject leaders and staff are unsure what they should be checking and when this should happen. Staff do not routinely spot pupils' misconceptions or check that pupils' understanding is secure before they move on to new learning.

Children in the early years, and particularly those in the two-year-olds' provision, also fare badly. Leaders have a weak understanding of how to design learning opportunities which enable children, at the very start of their school journey, to flourish and learn well. The lack of a discernible curriculum for most areas of learning means that children are poorly prepared for Year 1.

To compound the issues in the early years, children in the Nursery class and in the two-year-olds' provision do not benefit from a language-rich environment which supports them to begin to foster a love of books. Although leaders have taken some steps to improve the phonics curriculum, it is too early to see the impact of this work. Currently, the delivery of the phonics programme is not good enough to help pupils learn to read. The books that those pupils who are struggling to read use to practise phonics are not well matched to the sounds that they have learned in class. Too many of the weakest readers do not get the support that they need quickly enough. These pupils do not practise reading often enough to build their confidence and fluency.

Leaders do not make sure that pupils experience a high-quality reading curriculum from the early years to key stage 2. Staff do not support some older pupils in key stage 2 to develop positive attitudes to reading. While some pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading, others said that they do not have access to a wide enough range of books. Inspectors concluded that staff miss valuable opportunities to foster a love of reading.

Leaders have systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. However, too many pupils with SEND do not get the right support. Many pupils with SEND are unnecessarily withdrawn from mainstream classes. These pupils do not routinely learn alongside their peers.

Most pupils are polite and respectful. However, pupils do not always try their hardest in some lessons. Some pupils, particularly those with SEND, do not engage with their learning well. Some staff fail to challenge this apathy. Some pupils told inspectors that their classmates sometimes stop them from concentrating in lessons.

Leaders do not provide pupils with a sufficiently broad range of enrichment activities. However, some pupils participate in some activities to develop their understanding beyond the academic curriculum. For example, some pupils enjoy voting for their school councillors. They proudly told inspectors about winning a trophy when they represented the school in an athletics competition.

Leaders and governors have overseen a decline in the quality of education in the school. Leaders at all levels do not have the time or necessary skills to fulfil their

roles. They lack the capacity to bring about much-needed change. The school is overly reliant on external support.

The appointment of an experienced chair of governors has brought some much-needed stability to the governing body. Most governors lack both the will and the skill to effectively hold leaders to account. Many governors do not regularly attend governor meetings.

Staff appreciate the way that leaders have made some effort to reduce their workload. However, some staff report that their workload is unmanageable due to the many different roles they have to juggle.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff attend regular safeguarding training to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff remain vigilant to any changes that could indicate that a pupil is at potential risk of harm. Staff act quickly to report any concerns they have about a pupil's well-being or safety. Leaders seek support from external agencies, when necessary.

Pupils learn about different aspects of personal safety. This includes not giving out personal information when using the internet. They also learn about the dangers of misusing alcohol and illegal drugs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is inadequate. It does not meet the ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn in key stages 1 and 2. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, experience a disconnected curriculum which lacks coherence. Leaders must make sure that they design and implement curriculums which fully align with the national curriculum and enable pupils to gain a rich body of knowledge over time.
- Children in the early years, including those in the provision for two-year-old children, do not experience a well-designed curriculum. Children are poorly prepared for the demands of key stage 1. Leaders must make sure that they implement an appropriate curriculum which enables children, including two-year-olds, to build on their prior learning.
- Many subject leaders and staff, including those teaching the youngest children in the early years, lack the subject knowledge that they need to design and deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, the curriculum that pupils and children experience is not of a high enough quality. Leaders must make sure that staff across the school are trained well to design and deliver subject curriculums.

- For the most part, the assessment strategies that teachers use to check pupils' learning are either ineffective or non-existent. This is because subject leaders and staff are unsure what they should be checking and when they should do this. As a result, pupils have wide gaps in their learning. Leaders must make sure that they equip staff with the knowledge that they need to check that pupils are learning what they should.
- Leaders do not prioritise reading effectively. This means that pupils and children do not develop their reading knowledge as well as they should. Leaders must strengthen the reading curriculum so that children and pupils experience a rich, well-sequenced reading curriculum which ignites pupils' enthusiasm and passion for reading.
- The implementation of the phonics curriculum in the Reception class and in key stage 1 is at an early stage of development. This hinders how well pupils learn to read. Leaders must make sure that the phonics curriculum is consistently well delivered.
- Some pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning. They do not try their best in all subjects, and this limits their learning. Leaders must ensure that they develop a curriculum which inspires pupils to work hard and give their best. Leaders must also ensure that pupils can learn without distraction.
- The activities and experiences that pupils participate in beyond the academic curriculum are limited. This prevents pupils from developing their wider talents and interests. Leaders must ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their learning beyond the academic curriculum.
- Governance is ineffective. Governors have overseen a decline in the quality of education. Too many governors lack the appropriate knowledge, skills or understanding to be able to have an accurate oversight of the school. Governors should take urgent action to ensure that they are fulfilling their statutory duties and holding leaders to account effectively.
- Leadership and management are underdeveloped across the school. This has impacted negatively on the quality of education that pupils receive. It also means there is insufficient capacity to bring about improvements. Senior leaders and governors must act swiftly to improve the quality of leadership across the school.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	111210
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10226190
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Russell Houghton
Acting headteacher	Russell Fletcher Louise Davies (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.hallwoodpark.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders provide a breakfast club.
- Leaders make use of a dual registered placement for some pupils.
- There is provision for two-year-olds in the Nursery class.
- The acting headteacher has recently taken up post. At the time of the inspection, the interim executive headteacher had also only just taken up post.
- There have been extensive changes to the governing body. Both the chair and the vice-chair of governors have recently resigned. The new chair of governors has only been in post for just over a term.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, discussed curriculums, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. An inspector also observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered several other subjects on the school's curriculum. Inspectors talked to the leaders who lead these subjects. They also spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with the interim executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, other leaders and staff. The lead inspector spoke to the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke with the headteacher of the alternative education provider.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with different groups of pupils to gather their views of the school, their behaviour and their learning. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They spoke to several parents at the start and the end of the school day. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for safeguarding at the school. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with a governor, staff, parents and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors also considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders and staff. This included the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, headteacher reports and leaders' self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

Louise McArdle, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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