

Inspection of a good school: Old Hall School

Bentley Lane, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 7LU

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Old Hall School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Old Hall is a happy school. Staff go the extra mile to care for the pupils. A comment made by a parent was echoed by many others: 'It is a warm and welcoming environment for children to thrive.'

At the start of every day, staff remind pupils about people in school who can help them. Pupils learn about safe and unsafe relationships and when to say no. Bullying does not worry pupils. If pupils are unkind to each other, leaders deal with it quickly and effectively. As a result, pupils are happy in school.

Staff successfully teach pupils how to manage their emotions. They know their pupils well. Staff are quick to notice if a pupil is becoming agitated. Staff take effective action to resettle them back to their learning. Consequently, lessons run smoothly.

Leaders are ambitious and passionate for what pupils can achieve. They want pupils to learn to the best of their ability and learn the life skills they need to be successful in the future. Pupils respond well to these expectations. They persevere in their learning and take on responsibilities in school. These include being a member of the school council or a class monitor. Pupils value these opportunities.

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

Governors have a clear vision for the school. They want pupils to achieve the best they can. Every child matters. Leaders and all staff share this vision. Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of what the school does well and what could be even better.

Leaders think carefully about the precise knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. They have created different learning pathways for pupils to follow according to their

special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Therefore, pupils follow a learning pathway that is bespoke and effectively meets their needs.

In early years, pupils get off to a positive start. Staff use songs and a range of creative activities well to engage pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils are able to sustain their concentration for longer periods of time. Leaders have identified the knowledge and skills that children need to learn in early years. They consider how this links to learning in Year 1. However, further work needs to be done to make sure that what pupils learn in early years gives them the precise knowledge and skills they need to be ready for Year 1.

Staff use a range of assessments very well to identify gaps in pupils' learning. This includes checking the progress pupils are making towards the targets in their education, health and care (EHC) plans in every subject. School staff and the therapy team work closely together. This ensures that pupils get the right equipment and resources they need so that they can be successful in their learning. Evidence in pupils' work shows that they are making good progress towards their EHC plan outcomes.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils being able to read or being able to recognise sounds they will hear in their environment. Staff are well trained and supported by leaders to deliver an effective reading programme that has been successfully adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. This starts in early years. Staff teach the programme daily. Leaders regularly check how well pupils are learning to read. Staff provide extra help for those who need it. Some pupils are therefore developing into confident readers. They share their enjoyment of books by reading to their peers at lunchtime. Learners with the most complex needs enjoy sensory stories.

Developing pupils' communication is a strength of the school. Staff use a range of resources well. These include communication aids that closely match pupils' needs. Because of this, pupils can communicate to staff how they are feeling. Every child at Old Hall has a voice. Staff know, therefore, when a pupil may need extra help to manage their emotions.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well. For example, last year, pupils took part in an enterprise week. Shops were set up in the hall. Pupils applied what they had learned about money in their mathematics lessons by buying something in the shops. Children in early years have visited a local farm. Visitors to the school include musicians, theatre companies, the police and fire service. Leaders also provide pupils with after-school clubs. Pupils value these experiences.

All staff enjoy working at the school. They describe it as 'a family'. Staff speak highly about the support they get from leaders. They value the professional opportunities the school provides for them. Many staff have benefited from this support, including staff who originally joined the school in support roles and are now training to become qualified teachers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The leadership of safeguarding is a strength of the school. Everyone takes their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously. Staff are attentive to meeting pupils' needs. They report concerns, confident in the knowledge that leaders will deal with them effectively. Leaders have developed good relationships with a range of external agencies. This means that pupils and their families get the right help they need when they need it.

Leaders teach pupils how to keep themselves safe on a daily basis. The school has a child-friendly safeguarding policy. Pupils know who will help them in school. Consequently, parents say their children are safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The knowledge and skills pupils learn in early years does not prepare some children well enough for their learning in some subjects in Year 1. Leaders need to continue to refine and embed the early years curriculum so that it fully equips all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for Year 1.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

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

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| Unique reference number | 104274 |
| Local authority | Walsall |
| Inspection number | 10240307 |
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 103 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Lesley Foster |
| Headteacher | Matthew Ball (Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.old-hall.walsall.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 17 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, the school was federated with a local secondary special school.
- Since the previous inspection, an executive headteacher was appointed in March 2019. The head of school became head of school for both schools. A new assistant headteacher was also appointed in December 2019, a second in January 2020 and a third in April 2022.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school, other leaders, members of the governing body including the chair, the school improvement partner, therapists, staff and pupils.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, personal, social and health education, science and mathematics. For each deep dive, the 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 inspectors also talked to pupils and staff at unstructured times during the day.
- The lead inspector talked to parents and drivers at the school gate.
- The inspectors evaluated a range of school documents and looked at information on the school's website.
- The lead inspector checked the single central record of checks on adults in school and met with the school's safeguarding leaders to discuss how the school keeps its pupils safe.
- The inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses.

Inspection team

Lesley Yates, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Lisowski

Ofsted Inspector

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