

Inspection of an outstanding school: Hinderton School

Capenhurst Lane, Whitby, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7AQ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

Hinderton School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Hinderton School is a special place to learn. The school's vision of 'Learning Together' runs through all aspects of school life. Leaders have the highest expectations of pupils' personal, social and academic development.

Staff want the very best for all pupils. They nourish a culture which is optimistic, enthusiastic and caring. They help pupils to recognise their strengths and overcome any barriers to learning. Pupils thrive and make exceptional progress. They enjoy their time in school and value the help they get from staff.

Pupils, all of whom have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, learn to manage their feelings and interact positively with others. They are curious and kind. They behave in a way that is considerate of others. Pupils never deliberately disrupt learning. Bullying almost never happens. When it does, staff use it as an opportunity to improve the way that they help those involved. Any setback is used as an opportunity for improvement.

Pupils develop the ability to express themselves. All pupils learn how to play a range of instruments, including the ukulele and the djembe drum. They participate in a wide range of sports, including tennis, golf and boccia. Pupils enjoy trips and visits, such as a tour of Roman Chester and days out at the seaside.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious and flexible curriculum that is rooted in research. The curriculum develops pupils' social communication and their capacity to manage their own emotions. It also builds their knowledge of national curriculum subjects. Leaders have thought deeply about what pupils and children in the early years should know and be able to do. Staff are skilled at breaking down learning into small and achievable parts. Over time, the frequent small steps that pupils make amount to giant leaps. Their achievement is exceptional.

Staff expertly adapt the curriculum to cater for pupils' diverse needs. They use activities that keep pupils engaged and focused. They employ many innovative methods to assess pupils' learning. This helps them to find out about what all pupils know, including those who are pre- or non-verbal. They address pupils' misconceptions swiftly and sensitively. They give pupils many opportunities to practise new learning until their knowledge is secure. New learning is built on solid foundations.

Communication is the lifeblood of the school. Staff communicate clearly with pupils, often using pictures. They use a range of songs, stories and rhymes to build a love of words. Leaders are unwavering in their commitment to teach all pupils to read. Staff are experts in early reading. They closely follow an ambitious reading curriculum, which they adapt intelligently for individual pupils. Staff capably help pupils who are unable to identify letters initially.

Staff help parents and carers to support their child's reading. Staff produce videos that make it easier for parents to help their children. Pupils read books that closely match their knowledge of phonics. This helps a significant number of pupils to become accurate readers.

Staff follow the school's research-informed behaviour policy consistently. At the heart of this policy, lies a belief that behaviour is communication. Staff are highly attentive to pupils' needs. They intervene unobtrusively whenever there is any sign that a child is anxious. They remove any sources of stress and direct pupils to strategies that help them to control their emotions.

Pupils follow the school's routines as a matter of habit. This ensures that the environment is calm, orderly and predictable. Pupils enjoy friendly and respectful relationships with staff. Staff treat pupils with compassion and dignity. The school is inclusive to its core.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. From the early years, they focus on preparing children and pupils for adulthood. Through the essential skills curriculum, pupils develop a heightened awareness of themselves and others. They increasingly recognise and respect difference. They enjoy an inspiring range of opportunities to express themselves and develop their creativity.

Staff do all they can to meet pupils' needs. They work in partnership with external professionals, such as speech and language therapists, to help pupils flourish. They also harness the expertise of parents to jointly plan for the future. Parents are effusive about the work of the school. Many credit the school for making their child happy and improving well-being within their families.

The leadership team is meticulous and driven. The team is capably supported by a thoughtful and knowledgeable governing body. Staff love working at the school. Morale is incredibly high. Staff appreciate the ways in which leaders consider their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Staff understand the ways in which pupils with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) can be particularly vulnerable. They are alert to any sign that a pupil may be at risk of harm and report concerns.

Staff work with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the help that they need. The school has developed its own capacity to support families. For example, two staff are 'sleep counsellors' who support families with sleep hygiene.

Pupils learn how to manage different risks. They learn about e-safety and healthy relationships in a way that is developmentally appropriate.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in March 2013.

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 | 111510 |
| Local authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 10240594 |
| 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 | 48 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Lee Evans |
| Headteacher | Liam Dowling |
| Website | www.hinderton.cheshire.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- All pupils at Hinderton School have an EHC plan for ASD and related communication difficulties. Many have additional needs, such as severe learning difficulties.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision to educate any pupils.
- The school provides outreach support to other schools to help them meet the needs of pupils with ASD.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that 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 met with the headteacher and other leaders in school.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including its chair. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the school's improvement partner.

- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They spoke to staff about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors observed the school's routines, including pupils' arrival to school.
- The inspectors conducted deep dives into early reading, mathematics, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' learning and achievement. Where appropriate, they spoke to pupils about their learning and school life. They also considered other subjects, including music and history.
- The lead inspector spoke with a speech and language therapist who works closely with the school, and members of the school's safeguarding team.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. The lead inspector spoke to parents before the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted Inspector

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