

Inspection of an outstanding school: Percy Hedley School

West Lane, Killingworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 7BH

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Dr John Steward. This school is part of Percy Hedley Foundation, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rob McDonald, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Janet Donnelly.

What is it like to attend this school?

Percy Hedley School is a welcoming and friendly place. The school is calm and orderly. Leaders at all levels have developed the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious and engaging. The curriculum is well designed and meets the needs of pupils from the early years to post-16 well. Preparing pupils for adulthood and developing pupils' communication skills are key features of the curriculum. Staff have a good awareness of pupils' individual learning needs. They successfully adapt lessons to ensure pupils progress well.

The school has specialist facilities and resources to support a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These facilities include a hydrotherapy pool and outside play areas that promote movement. There are therapeutic spaces and resources to support pupils with physical disabilities. On-site specialist staff such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists support pupils and advise teachers well. This helps to ensure pupils receive regular specialist support.

The school places a high emphasis on pupil welfare. Pupils can seek the support of the pupil well-being team if they have any worries or concerns. This ensures pupils feel safe. Bullying is infrequent. On the very rare occasions it does happen, staff intervene swiftly.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened its curriculum. It is split into three learning pathways that match pupils' SEND needs and academic ability. Across age groups, the curriculum is skilfully delivered by knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff. Adaptations are made that ensure all pupils access lessons well. Reading and communication are prioritised across the school. Books typically match pupils' reading ability. Pupils routinely use their phonic knowledge to tackle new words successfully. Pupils who are not yet ready to learn phonics are supported to develop their listening and speaking skills. Some pupils learn Makaton to communicate or use assistive technology, such as voice output communication aids.

Curriculum maps for science and for personal, social and health education (PSHE) are clearly organised. They detail what is to be learned and when. The school has ambition for all pupils to progress well. Older pupils pursue a range of qualifications that meet their individual needs. This prepares them for the next steps in their education and towards adulthood.

Pupils interact confidently with visitors. They are polite and courteous. Most pupils are happy in the school. They say it is a 'privilege' to have a place there. Pupils know that adults will support them if they need help. Pupils behave well. If they need help to manage their behaviour, staff steer them back on track effectively. Pupils fully engage with learning. This means lessons are calm.

Overall school attendance is not good enough. Despite receiving transport into school, too many pupils are frequently absent. The school's actions to reduce absence have increased over the last academic year. However, progress is limited. The school has recently invested in extra staffing to help tackle absence. The school is further developing its work to promote pupils' regular attendance.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. Leaders at all levels ensure there is a sharp focus on all aspects of pupils' development. There is a comprehensive wider development offer that is informed by pupil voice. Staff lead a variety of activities during the day to develop pupils' creative, sporting and social skills. Pupils follow the school's '30 activities' pledge. This includes visiting museums, places of worship and the local area.

Pupils learn to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They know the link between movement and positive physical health. They understand that what they eat plays an important part in their well-being. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of consent and physical touch. They know what is acceptable. Pupils have some awareness of the risks they face in the community. They have a stronger understanding of how to keep themselves safe while using technology.

Staff speak highly of the school. Leaders at all levels engage staff to minimise any workload issues. Staff have enough time to assess pupils regularly and prepare for meetings. Early career teachers feel well supported. They receive appropriate mentoring and time to organise lessons. Trustees are proud of the school's work to support pupils with SEND. They are willing to share successful practice with other schools. Governors

challenge the school's work effectively. Trustees and governors are aware of their statutory responsibilities. This includes all matters relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils are frequently absent. This limits their learning and has an impact on their academic progress. The school should strengthen its attendance systems and attendance strategy to promote regular pupil attendance. The school should provide challenge and support for parents to help them to overcome any barriers that may prevent their child from attending school regularly.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and](#)

[protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108657
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10255923
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	30
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Donnelly
Headteacher	John Steward
Website	www.percyhedley.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 September 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Percy Hedley School is a special school for pupils aged between three and 19 years.
- The school makes provision for pupils with complex SEND. This includes those with speech, language and communication needs, physical disabilities and autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, pathway leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive of the foundation and a member of the board of trustees. An inspector met with representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector met with local authority school improvement representatives via a remote meeting.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tricia Stevens

Ofsted Inspector

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