

Inspection of a good school: Presfield High School and Specialist College

Preston New Road, Churchtown, Southport, Merseyside PR9 8PA

Inspection dates:

26 to 27 September 2023

Outcome

Presfield High School and Specialist College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Each day, pupils are warmly welcomed to this happy and inclusive school. They benefit from a culture that celebrates uniqueness and difference. This provides them with a sense of respect and belonging.

Pupils enjoy strong, caring relationships with adults, who know them well. They value the wide range of pastoral support that adults offer them. They trust that there is always an adult available to help them if they are worried.

The school has high expectations. Staff put no ceiling on what they want pupils to achieve by the time they leave. They are successful in ensuring that most pupils achieve well. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Pupils behave well around school. Adults help them to learn well and to socialise during break and lunchtimes. They skilfully help them to regulate their behaviour and manage their emotions.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities that the school offers them to develop themselves personally and ready themselves for adult life. For example, pupils, including students in the sixth form, learn to use public transport, go shopping, cook meals and complete domestic chores. These valuable activities equip them well for life outside school. They become increasingly confident and independent.

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

The school has designed an effective curriculum which reflects a determination that every pupil should be well prepared for their next stage in education and for life in modern Britain. In most subjects, the curriculum gives pupils the knowledge and understanding to be confident learners and achieve success. The school has thought carefully about what it wants to teach pupils and the order in which it wants staff to teach it. However, this is not

the case in a small number of subjects for which the school has not yet finalised the curriculum. Sometimes, this hinders how well some pupils learn. Despite this, most pupils achieve well in most subjects.

Teachers explain new ideas clearly. They are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They help pupils to revisit and remember important learning. They use assessment well to ensure that all staff know exactly what pupils know. Learning goals in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are interwoven into all aspects of the curriculum and each pupil's personalised pathway.

Developing effective communication and language skills is at the heart of the school's work. The school has given a great deal of thought to how to meet the wide range of pupils' communication, language and social interaction needs, such as those of highly academic students who want to work in industry or go to university. Staff have helped these students to develop social skills to enable them to communicate confidently in these settings.

Although communication, language and social interaction have a high profile in the school, a few teachers are less confident in using the agreed strategies. Occasionally, staff do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop and apply their communication and language skills across the whole curriculum.

Reading and enjoying books and stories have a high profile in the school. Pupils are excited to be getting a new school library soon. They have played a central part in designing the new facility. The school has a good understanding of where all pupils are in reading development. Adults help pupils who find reading more difficult. They support them effectively.

Pupils' behaviour is good. The nature of many pupils' needs means that they might occasionally disturb lessons. When this is the case, adults skilfully keep disruption to a minimum. Pupils enjoy a harmonious environment that ensures effective learning. The school has worked hard to improve the attendance of pupils, which had dipped following the COVID-19 pandemic. There are signs of improvement in this area.

The school offers a range of opportunities to increase pupils' awareness and enjoyment of the world around them. Pupils visit museums and galleries and enjoy a range of residential experiences where they learn to climb, cave, kayak and abseil. Older pupils and sixth-form students take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and have the opportunity to be reading and sports mentors at the local primary school.

Comprehensive careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) are available to pupils. This includes work experience, work-placement opportunities and other practical experiences, which are all aimed at developing pupils' confidence, resilience, and independence skills.

Governors hold leaders to account for their work to improve the curriculum. They are an effective, knowledgeable and experienced governing body. Staff feel that the new leadership team is considerate of their workload and well-being and take this into account

when making changes. They are proud to work at the school. The school works tirelessly to help parents and carers both pastorally and in relation to their children's education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not given sufficient thought to the essential knowledge that pupils must have and in what order they should acquire it. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in these subjects so that teachers have enough information to shape teaching and enable all pupils to achieve well.
- A few adults are less confident at using the agreed communication, language and social-interaction strategies. As a result, pupils occasionally miss out on opportunities to develop and apply their communication and language skills across the whole curriculum. The school should ensure that all adults are well equipped and confident in using the school's agreed communication, language and social-interaction strategies.

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 March 2018.

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	104977
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10269007
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Howard Cooper
Headteacher	Lucy McLoughlin
Website	www.presfieldschool.org
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. She took up her post in May 2023.
- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with a diagnosis of autism and related communication difficulties. In addition, pupils may have a range of secondary needs such as social, emotional and mental health, sensory or medical needs.
- 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.
- The school makes use of alternative provision. It uses one Ofsted-registered provider and one that is not registered.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication, language and social interaction, including aspects of early reading; mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Where appropriate, inspectors spoke to some pupils about their learning. They also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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.
- Where appropriate, inspectors spoke with pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, who was also the SEND coordinator and the acting deputy headteacher.
- An inspector also spoke to members of the senior leadership team including the designated safeguarding lead and CEIAG lead.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils.
- An inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke on the telephone to two representatives of Sefton local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to school improvement, safeguarding and the checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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