

Inspection of an outstanding school: Piper Hill High School

Firbank Road, Newall Green, Manchester M23 2YS

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

Piper Hill High School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Louise Lynn. This school is part of Prospere Learning Trust which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Linda Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jenny Andrews.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this exceptional school. They feel safe and happy in this welcoming place, where everyone is treated equally. They rise to the school's high expectations of their behaviour because staff know and understand them well.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, realise the school's high expectations for their achievement. They are curious and inquisitive learners. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

At the heart of the school's aspirations is the relentless desire to prepare all pupils extremely well for their next steps in education and life beyond school. Pupils undertake carefully considered work experience placements and students in the post-16 provision have opportunities to experience learning which is linked to real-life experiences.

Pupils benefit greatly from the broad programme of enrichment opportunities that the school has developed to help them to become more resilient and confident. Pupils enjoy residential trips, trips to the theatre and outdoor learning opportunities. They participate in a multitude of varied activities, including a wide range of sports. The school makes every effort to prepare pupils for the best lives possible.

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

The school has closely matched the very well-thought-out curriculum to the needs of each pupil. The curriculum takes into account what pupils need to know and the order in which staff should teach this. Pupils experience a rich, precisely sequenced curriculum that builds and deepens their understanding over time. They have time to repeat and consolidate learning to help embed important knowledge and skills. Pupils' individual

targets, which are linked to their education, health and care plans, thread through every learning activity. The curriculum in the post-16 provision has a strong focus on preparation for adult life and community-based learning.

Some pupils start at Piper Hill not able to read confidently. Regular phonics sessions help them to develop the essential skills they need to catch up quickly. Focused sessions provide opportunities for pupils to build fluency and expression in their reading. Pupils love sharing books with their teachers and with reading buddies. They benefit from the school's well-stocked library. They choose lots of books to read, and to have read to them, for pleasure. An impressive range of immersive experiences, such as organising for representatives of sanctuaries for birds of prey to visit the school when reading a book about owls and sensory activities involving sound, taste and touch, bring books to life for pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary. They have very strong attitudes to learning. They are eager to learn and they do their best in all that they do. Learning is not disrupted by poor behaviour.

The school's provision for personal development is rich and broad. It has ensured that pupils' preparation for adulthood incorporates aspects of relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about positive relationships and how to keep their bodies healthy. The school ensures that pupils learn about moral and cultural issues. They learn about different faiths and cultures. There is a wide range of opportunities and experiences offered to pupils. For example, pupils are involved in a variety of outdoor learning activities and can even stay overnight in the school pods. The school council is a strength of the school. Staff support pupils in having a voice in enhancing their school. School councillors take their role seriously. They have recently worked on improving recycling processes across the school.

There is an unrelenting drive to prepare pupils for the world around them. Staff do not see pupils' needs as a barrier to achieving this. The school has implemented a well-planned and well-delivered careers programme, which ensures that pupils, parents and carers are fully informed about options for their next steps. Pupils have opportunities to study for a wide range of vocational qualifications. In the post-16 provision, students organise work-related activities such as planning birthday parties and working in the onsite café. This gives them valuable experience of the workplace. The students grow in confidence as a result.

The school makes every effort to engage and inform parents of the opportunities available to their children. For example, parents are invited to meetings to discuss the different options available for post-16 education.

Staff feel that they are highly valued. They appreciate the comprehensive training that helps them to meet the individual needs of the pupils and to deliver effective personalised learning. When making changes, the school takes into account the likely impact on staff workload. Governors and trust staff are very actively involved in the life of the school. They support the school well and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 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	141805
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10268757
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
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	260
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jenny Andrews
CEO	Linda Jones
Headteacher	Louise Lynn
Website	www.piperhillschool.net/
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Prospere Learning Trust.
- Piper Hill is a special school which provides education for 11 to 19-year-old pupils and with identified complex cognitive difficulties (severe learning difficulties as the primary need).
- The school operates on two sites. The main site caters for all year groups from Year 7 to Year 13. The second site, for some sixth-form students, is at Greenbrow Road, Wythenshawe M23 2SX.
- The school does not use 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection 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 of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. They also met with members of the governing body and trustees including the acting chair of the local governing board and the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experience of school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (including early reading), science and mathematics. For each deep dive, they 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.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subject areas.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Farrent

Ofsted Inspector

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