

Inspection of a good school: New Heights High School

1a Dyson Hall Drive, Fazakerley, Liverpool, Merseyside L9 7HA

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2023

Outcome

New Heights High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join the school having had difficulties in managing their feelings and regulating their behaviour at previous settings. Staff transform many pupils' lives by helping them to get back on track with their education.

Pupils enjoy warm and nurturing relationships with staff who know them well. This helps pupils to develop a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Staff notice when pupils experience distress. They are quick to anticipate conflict and respond swiftly and sensitively to pupils' emotional needs. Pupils are happy and know that they are in safe hands.

The school's priority is to rebuild pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils regain confidence in themselves and in their abilities. This helps them to successfully move on to schools or destinations that are right for them.

Staff understand pupils' needs, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of many pupils, exceptionally well. These insights help staff to deliver a personalised and well-designed curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of this school. The school threads rich opportunities for personal, social, health and economic education into each day. This, along with a sharp focus on pupils' emotional growth, enables pupils to develop their resilience and their self-belief.

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

The school has designed an effective and ambitious curriculum. It is determined for all pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they need to progress successfully back into mainstream education or, if appropriate, specialist schools.

In each subject, curriculum content is set out precisely. The school has thought carefully about what pupils should learn and the order that staff should teach it. This gives pupils the knowledge and understanding that they need to make sense of new learning.

Teachers explain new ideas clearly. They are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. Teachers help pupils to revisit and remember important learning. The school knows that many pupils arrive with gaps in their knowledge. Teachers use assessment information to design learning that supports pupils to bridge these gaps and, as a result, to achieve well.

The school ensures that pupils receive the support that they need to learn well. Staff quickly identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. They help these pupils to achieve academically while also building their self-esteem. Pupils with SEND succeed alongside their peers and participate fully in the same curriculum and opportunities.

In the main, the school recognises the importance of reading. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 benefit from a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Typically, staff provide additional support for older pupils who struggle with reading. However, the school's overall approach to reading is not fully developed. Some staff do not support pupils in their reading as effectively as they could. This means that some pupils who lack fluency and confidence in reading do not catch up as quickly as they should. Nor do these pupils develop a love of reading.

The school is typically a calm place where pupils can learn. Pupils show respect for their friends, staff and visitors. Pupils thrive in the school's environment of high expectations and clear boundaries. However, many pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not attend school regularly enough. The school is doing all that it can to improve pupils' attendance. This includes frequently visiting pupils at home to re-engage them and to check that they are safe and well.

Pupils' personal development is well matched to their needs. Staff organise activities that respond to current issues as they arise, including recent workshops on knife crime. Older pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This provides opportunities for pupils to learn first aid and to experience camping and volunteer work.

The school makes sure that older pupils benefit from comprehensive careers advice and guidance. This includes work experience, work placements and other practical experiences that are aimed at developing pupils' confidence, resilience and independence.

Governors share the school's ambitions. They demonstrate their commitment through the challenge that they offer. Staff value the support that they receive for their well-being and workload. For example, they appreciate the opportunity for supervision and counselling sessions when needed. Staff are proud to work at the school and are determined to make a difference to the lives of pupils and their families.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff are not as adept as they should be in helping pupils to learn to read and engaging them in recreational reading. Consequently, some pupils lack confidence and fluency in their reading and do not enjoy reading as much as they could. The school should equip staff to ignite a love of reading in pupils and to support them to become fluent and confident readers.

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 November 2012.

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	135656
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10268950
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Andain
Headteacher	James McDonald
Website	www.newheightsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides short-term, full-time education for pupils in key stages 2, 3 and 4 who are at risk of exclusion, or who have been excluded, from their mainstream schools. At the time of this inspection, the school was providing short-term placements for a small number of pupils from key stage 1.
- All pupils have SEND. Some pupils are in the process of being assessed for an education, health and care (EHC) plan for social, emotional and mental health needs or for autism. Some pupils at the school already have an EHC plan and are waiting for a suitable school placement.
- All pupils are placed at the school by the local authority. This is the only pupil referral unit in the local authority. Many pupils are required to travel considerable distances to attend this school.
- The school operates from three sites. The main site is located at 1a Dyson Hall Drive, Fazakerley, Liverpool L9 7HA and caters for key stage 3 pupils. The second site caters for key stage 4 pupils. It is located at Parklands Complex, Conleach Road, Speke, Liverpool L24 0TY. The third site, which caters for key stage 2 pupils, is located at Mill Road, Everton, Liverpool L6 2AS.

- 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.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- On the Get Information about Schools (GIAS) website, the age range for the school is incorrectly recorded as 11 to 16. The correct age range is 7 to 16. The headteacher has confirmed that updated information has been provided to the GIAS service.

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 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English and early reading, mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Where appropriate, inspectors spoke with some pupils about their learning. They also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- 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, heads of school and other leaders, including the designated safeguarding leaders, SEND coordinators and the leader for careers advice and guidance.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body. She also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to school improvement.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

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