

Inspection of a good school: Hollywater School

Mill Chase Road, Bordon, Hampshire GU35 0HA

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 December 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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.

What is it like to attend this school?

From early years to sixth form, pupils love coming to this nurturing and inclusive school. Each morning, pupils receive a warm welcome from staff as they arrive. Strong, trusting relationships between staff and pupils are the reason that this school is such a happy place to be. This is shown in their desire to communicate with words, symbols, signs, ready smiles and laughter each day. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging here.

Staff have high expectations of pupils. Well-established daily routines create a safe and harmonious environment for pupils. They try their best and behave well. Simple rules, such as 'kind hands', help pupils to know what is expected from them. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should because of weaknesses in the curriculum. The school is working resolutely to improve the quality of education.

Opportunities to strengthen pupils' characters are wide ranging. Pupils develop their confidence and independence well. They take part enthusiastically in trips to the theatre and develop new interests such as sailing or horse riding. In preparation for adulthood, pupils learn important skills such as planning and cooking meals, vacuuming, making a bed and organising their time well.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils to be successful. However, since the previous inspection, the quality of education has declined. Supported by the local authority, the school is taking decisive action to rapidly bring about the much-needed improvements. They are focusing on addressing the most important things first. Nevertheless, some of the planned actions are at the earliest stages of implementation. Governors are providing appropriate support and challenge to the school during this period of improvement, using their relevant knowledge and experience.

In the sixth form, the curriculum is well crafted. It is tailored around each student's special educational needs and/or disabilities and links closely to their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Students study a range of nationally accredited courses, learn about careers and employment, and prepare for independent living. However, much of the curriculum in the other year groups is currently under construction. In most subjects, the important knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it is not set out precisely. Staff are not clear about what pupils have learned before or what they will learn next. Consequently, pupils do not consistently build on their prior knowledge and do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils have a wide range of learning, pastoral and medical needs. Their individual needs are identified and known well and responded to thoughtfully. For instance, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and emotional well-being support are part of the school's daily routines. However, more widely, there are too many inconsistencies in staff's subject knowledge and understanding of the best ways to help pupils learn. This means that some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they might.

Rightly, developing pupils' communication, language and reading is a top priority. Pupils' learning, independence and personal development are supported well through the careful choice and use of appropriate communication aids. Staff bring stories alive using a range of sensory techniques to engage and stimulate pupils' imaginations. Pupils regularly read or are read to by staff. Some pupils are at the early stages of learning to read. The books these pupils read help them practise the sounds they are learning. However, some staff do not have the expertise required to deliver the school's phonics programme effectively. Where this happens, this slows pupils from making the progress of which they are capable.

Pupils are polite and thoughtful. Around school, pupils share a warm smile with their friends and staff as they go about their day. Pupils are taught to express and understand their emotions. On the occasions when pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour, staff respond sensitively and carefully to help pupils regulate their feelings.

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. Pupils develop an understanding of the world they inhabit. For example, they learn about citizenship by raising funds for different charities and volunteering at the local foodbank. Pupils develop their leadership skills by taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, as members of the school council or as a play leader. A variety of well-considered work and enterprise opportunities are threaded through the curriculum at every opportunity. This includes access to independent careers, advice and guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Across several subjects, the school has not ensured that the knowledge and skills pupils should learn and remember is defined precisely. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school must ensure that all subjects identify the essential knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and revisit as they progress through the school.
- Not all staff have strong enough subject knowledge or understanding of the best ways to help pupils learn. This means that some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they might. The school should ensure that staff are well trained so that they have the knowledge they need to teach all subjects effectively.
- The reading curriculum is not well implemented. This means that pupils do not develop secure phonics knowledge to be able to read or access other learning materials. The school must ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to teach the school's phonics programme effectively.

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 January 2014.

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	131068
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10287982
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Silas Jones
Headteacher	Maria-Brigid Ryan
Website	www.hollywaterschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils aged four to 19. It provides specialist support for pupils who have profound and multiple learning disabilities, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and social and communication needs, including autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.
- The previous headteacher left the school in April 2022. An interim headteacher was appointed from January to December 2022. The current headteacher took up her role in January 2023.
- The school is not currently using any alternative providers.
- 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.
- 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 met with the headteacher, leaders, teachers and other staff. The lead inspector had a discussion with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative from Hampshire local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, including early reading, art and mathematics. 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. The lead inspector also looked at a sample of pupils' work for mathematics.
- 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 inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons. They also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Regan

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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