

Inspection of a good school: Chaigeley School

Lymm Road, Thelwall, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 2TE

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

Chaigeley School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Chaigeley School. This is because staff have detailed knowledge of each pupil and have developed strong, caring relationships with them. Most pupils have experienced challenging times in the past. At Chaigeley, they feel valued and listened to. This helps them to feel happy and safe.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school is committed to supporting every pupil to achieve their best. Staff are highly skilled at adapting the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils strive to meet the school's high expectations of their academic and social goals. Typically, they achieve well from their various starting points.

Staff motivate and encourage pupils to try hard. They provide ongoing therapeutic support and guidance if pupils struggle with managing their own behaviour. For example, the school's therapy dog helps pupils to regulate their emotions.

Pupils enjoy learning outdoors. Pushbike maintenance and engine-repair activities in the school's workshop help to improve their resilience and problem-solving skills. Pupils relish competing against other schools in sports tournaments. Such experiences nurture and encourage their interests and abilities. Pupils take part in the many enrichment activities offered by the school, such as rock climbing, fishing and skateboarding. They experience a variety of trips and outings, including visits to other countries.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum to meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. It has implemented effective ways of collating academic, emotional and pastoral information about pupils. This allows curriculum adaptations to be seamlessly woven into pupils' individual timetables.

The school's long-term aim is to prepare pupils for their next stages in education, training, work and adulthood. It achieves this well. Overall, learning builds logically over time. The school has mapped out the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn across most of the curriculum. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not considered precisely enough what pupils should learn and by when. This prevents teachers from accurately identifying and building on what pupils should know and remember. This hinders pupils from learning all that they could.

Teachers select resources and activities that engage pupils in purposeful learning. For example, pupils are captivated when using different mediums to explore their own ideas. Teachers use assessment information effectively to shape future teaching. In most subjects, important learning is frequently revisited to ensure that pupils build their knowledge over time.

The school prioritises reading. An effective phonics programme is in place to help pupils to become confident and fluent readers. Most pupils in key stage 2 are at the early stages of learning to read. Staff swiftly identify pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. These pupils receive daily phonics sessions to practise the sounds that they know from well-chosen resources. Pupils respond well to the wide range of reading competitions and rewards.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly and accurately. Pupils benefit from carefully tailored therapy sessions. For example, staff assist pupils with SEMH in regulating their emotions through a 'sensory cottage', play therapy and social stories. Pupils take part in all that school life has to offer.

Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and purposeful. There has been a renewed focus on clear routines and consistent expectations. Careful consideration of staffing arrangements, alongside extensive training, has resulted in a marked improvement in pupils' conduct and behaviour. Staff use identified strategies to help pupils to feel comfortable if they are feeling unsettled or anxious.

Pupils celebrate national events that promote fundamental British values. They also enjoy taking part in enterprise activities, such as cookery and running the tuck shop. There is a well-ordered programme for relationships and sex education and health education. Pupils learn about the changes that will happen to their bodies as they grow older. Older pupils understand the features of positive relationships and consent.

Staff help pupils to prepare for their next steps after finishing school. Pupils benefit from meaningful visits with employers. They receive regular careers guidance. Pupils are well supported through robust transitions to post-16 provision. Visiting colleges and attending workshops help to support them in their bespoke pathways.

Leaders invest in staff development and staff well-being. This helps staff to carry out their roles effectively. Staff said that the school is a happy community where they take care of each other. Trustees have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support the school well and provide effective challenge to leaders.

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 subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn and when this should happen. This means that, on occasion, pupils do not encounter learning in a logical way to help build their knowledge and understanding over time. The school should clarify the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn in these subjects and the order that this should be taught.

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 February 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	111498
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10290001
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	William Howell
Headteacher	Paul Lambert
Website	www.chaigeley.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides education for pupils, aged eight to 16, with SEMH difficulties. Some pupils also have autism and other learning needs.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Places are commissioned by local authorities.
- The school is part of the Chaigeley Educational Foundation, which is a registered charity.
- 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 and other leaders. An inspector also spoke with the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority.
- An inspector met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with the special educational needs coordinators and reviewed samples of documentation relating to pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 took account of the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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