

Inspection of an outstanding school: Gilbrook School

Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch, Merseyside CH49 8HE

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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?

Pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), settle into school life well. Staff build friendly, good-humoured relationships with pupils. They treat them with respect. Many pupils have had a challenging time in the education system before joining the school. They often arrive with negative views of learning and poor self-esteem. The school works well to change pupils' education experience into a more positive one. It places considerable importance on helping pupils to feel safe and happy in school.

Staff know pupils very well. They provide pupils with the help, care and support that they need to manage their behaviour more successfully than they have in the past. Pupils' attitudes to learning become more positive as they become settled in school. They follow the school's rules and routines well. On occasions, when pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour, staff respond sensitively and carefully to help pupils regulate their emotions.

The school is committed to every pupil achieving their best. It strives for pupils to have the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in later life. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the curriculums in some subjects are underdeveloped.

Pupils enjoy looking after the animals on the school farm. They talked confidently about how working with the animals helps them develop their problem-solving skills or helps them cope in dealing with different emotions. The school ensures that pupils get many opportunities to support their understanding of right and wrong. For example, the police come into school and speak with pupils about their role in the community.

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

In some subjects, the school has defined a clear curriculum which teachers follow carefully. These curriculums identify the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should be taught. Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver these curriculums effectively. Assessment strategies are used more effectively in these subjects as teachers know what they should check to make sure that pupils are learning curriculum content.

In a number of other subjects, the curriculums are not well developed. Sometimes there are multiple versions of subject curriculums. In these subjects, teachers are not clear what pupils should know. This, alongside gaps in their own subject knowledge, hinders teachers from designing learning that enables pupils to build a secure body of knowledge. It also hampers teachers from being able to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before new learning is introduced. Teachers cannot spot and then address gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects.

Reading is a high priority for the school. Pupils develop a love of books. They talked enthusiastically about different books and authors that they have studied in class or read at home. The school has recently introduced a new phonics programme. While most staff have received the training that they need to deliver the programme confidently, others are less well equipped. This leads to sounds being taught inaccurately, which in turn, makes it difficult for pupils to blend sounds correctly to read words.

The school is mindful of the additional needs of pupils beyond those linked to their primary SEND need. Teachers ensure that they create targets which link to pupils' education, health care (EHC) plans. Where targets relate to the pupils' behaviour or social needs, pupils move towards achieving those goals.

Attendance is a high priority for the school. The strategies to improve attendance are effective. Pupils attend school more often than they did in the past. Pupils show respect to the adults in school, including visitors. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. As a result, the school is a calm oasis for pupils. This helps them to concentrate on their learning in lessons.

Pupils' development beyond the academic curriculum is at the core of the school. The school provides pupils with a wide variety of trips and visits outside of the classroom. For example, pupils get the opportunity to visit the Welsh countryside. This allows them to put into practise the skills they have learned at school in a different context. Pupils show tremendous respect and tolerance of other faiths, religions and beliefs. They have an age-appropriate understanding of many aspects of equality.

Governors understand their responsibilities. The school supports staff's workload well. Staff value the additional sessions that leaders provide to support them with additional tasks that they need to complete to support the pupils' effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the subject curriculums are underdeveloped. This means that teachers do not have the guidance that they need to design learning that helps pupils to learn all that they should. This hampers pupils' achievement. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in these subjects so that teachers know what must be learned and when this should happen.
- Teachers are not able to check that pupils have learned all that they should in some subject areas. This means that they are not able to spot and address gaps in pupils' understanding to make sure that their knowledge is secure. The school should ensure, through their curriculum design, that teachers know what to check and that they provide suitable support to overcome gaps in pupils' learning.
- In some subjects, including phonics, staff occasionally do not have the required subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. This hinders how well pupils learn the required content. The school should ensure that staff receive the training and support that they need to develop their subject knowledge in these curriculum areas.

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 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	105134
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10256242
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	6 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sara Simmons, MBE
Headteacher	Kirsten Brown
Website	www.gilbrookschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's 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: early reading, mathematics, history and geography. 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.
- Inspectors met with other subject leaders to discuss the curriculum in those 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders to discuss pupils' wider development.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the vice-chairs of governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. They scrutinised leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

Pippa Jackson Maitland

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024