

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Hollybank School

Roe Head, Far Common Road, Mirfield, West Yorkshire WF14 0DQ

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Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

## **Outcome**

Hollybank School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Ailsa Moore. This school is part of the Hollybank Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Anna O'Mahoney, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clare Morrow.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Hollybank School provides an inspirational, safe and nurturing environment in which pupils thrive. There is a strong sense of family across the school. Pupils are happy and feel safe. Adults know the pupils extremely well. They care deeply about pupils' emotional, physical and educational welfare. Most pupils join the school in the early years and stay until the end of the sixth form.

The school has high expectations for all pupils. There is a clear ambition and determination that every pupil should benefit from a rich, broad learning experience. Staff are highly attuned to understand and address pupils special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils follow a sensory curriculum which develops pupils' interaction through learning activities which engage all the senses. The level of attention that adults show towards pupils is exceptional. They provide highly tailored provision to meet pupils' complex individual needs. Adults have an expert understanding of how to develop and support the earliest stages of pupils' communication and interaction with others.

Parents and carers spoken to speak highly of the school. One parent comment reflects the views of many, saying 'words are not enough to describe this school, it is just amazing.'

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

The staff team know their pupils extremely well. They have developed a highly specialised curriculum which is matched to the specific needs of each individual pupil. There is a collective method of planning and delivering educational provision. This involves the in-house health professionals and therapists as well as teaching staff. The result is a truly holistic approach to learning. There is an interconnectedness between the subject

curriculum and meeting physical and/or medical needs. For example, one pupil while experiencing sensory stories trains their eyes on resources to build up their visual strength. Staff consistently make the most of learning activities. They recap on language and involve pupils as thoroughly as they can in learning.

Pupils are actively encouraged to provide staff with responses such as 'yes', 'no', 'stop' and 'more'. Pupils do this using their tailored communication system. Staff are very respectful of pupils. This is shown in the way in which they talk to pupils as they narrate what is happening now and next. There are highly effective relationships between pupils and staff built on excellent communication and trust. Staff manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well. They are very successful in helping pupils to regulate their emotions. Adults take time to discuss lesson transitions and to encourage pupils to take part in activities.

Staff assist pupils in becoming more aware of their bodies through massage and exercise. Pupils have ample opportunities to change their body position during the school day. Some pupils spend time standing using assistance equipment. Others use strollers to build up their core and leg strength. Staff also recognise when pupils need to rest and are responsive to this.

Staff are very motivated and proud to work at this school. They are wholly positive about the support they receive for their workload and well-being. The trust has an impressive training package for staff at all levels within the organisation. Staff develop specialist expertise. They are adept at making the most effective changes to lesson activities so that these are specifically matched to each pupil. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

The school provides opportunities such as horse riding, cooking and swimming to broaden the pupils' range of experiences. Leaders use grants to fund additional curriculum sessions in swimming and trampoline therapy.

Pupils have regular opportunities to go out into the local area. They visit the library, shops and cafes to practice communicating with people outside of the school. A member of staff assists parents in taking pupils out in their home locality, for example visiting the hairdressers or local shops. This supports parents to build the confidence to take their children out at other times.

Parents speak highly of the networking events, such as siblings day. This allows the family members to build friendships and have the opportunity to talk with others in similar circumstances. Parents appreciate the on-going conversation with members of staff and the measures taken to keep them informed about their child's learning.

Leaders are relentless in their drive and determination to ensure that pupils receive the highest quality of education. Trust officers and school governors offer leaders high levels of support and challenge in equal measure. This leads to exemplary educational provision for all pupils in school.

## **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 October 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	107796
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297222
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	38
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	5
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Clare Morrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ailsa Moore
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hollybanktrust.com">www.hollybanktrust.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- All pupils at Hollybank school have an EHC plan. Pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD).
- The school does not make use of any alternative education provision.

## 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteachers, the assistant headteachers and teaching staff.
- The inspectors also met with representatives of the governing body and the Hollybank Trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and early reading, mathematics, and personal and sensory education. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at evidence for learning.
- Inspectors visited pupils across the school, including those in the post 16 provision.
- 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 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were also taken into account. Inspectors met with several parents.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of local authority officers who commission the services of the school.

### **Inspection team**

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Thorp

His Majesty's Inspector

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