Inspection of a good school: Great Arley School

Holly Road, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 4HH

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

Outcome

Great Arley School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school. They are kind and polite, and thrive due to the positive relationships that they have with the staff, who look after them well. In the early years, children settle in quickly. They make a positive start to their education. Pupils are happy.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has high aspirations for their achievement and conduct. They achieve well.

Pupils make the most of the opportunities that the school provides for them to develop their talents and interests. These include activities such as the school band, drawing and sports. They become confident and independent young people.

As school councillors, pupils take an active role in improving the school. Digital leaders help their peers to develop their understanding of how to stay safe online. Pupils raise money for a variety of local and national charities. They show a high degree of care for others.

Pupils take part in a wide range of trips that help them to deepen their understanding of the wider world and the subjects that they study. For example, they visit museums, a library and a zoo and go on residential trips to take part in adventurous activities.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. In the early years, children make a strong start to their time at school. At the end of key stage 4, pupils move on to a wide range of courses at local colleges. The school takes great care to ensure that pupils make a successful transition at each stage of their education. Pupils benefit from a vocational curriculum that helps them to develop a wide range of skills. For example, staff teach them about how to manage a budget, to cook from a meal plan and to cultivate a garden. They are well prepared for adulthood.

Staff use their subject knowledge effectively to create activities that help most pupils to follow the curriculum content successfully. The important knowledge that pupils should acquire is set out clearly. Staff identify and address any misconceptions that pupils may have about their learning. Pupils build their knowledge securely over time. This is reflected in the work that they produce.

The school's assessment strategies are well developed. Staff have a detailed understanding of each pupil's learning needs. Staff use this information intelligently to ensure that pupils achieve the targets that they set for them.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff provide these pupils with experiences that enable them to learn well alongside their peers.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' reading, language and communication skills. This includes the use of visual aids and modern technology. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to communicate develop their vocabulary through singing songs and rhymes. They benefit from the specialist help that they receive to improve the accuracy of their spoken language. As a result, they learn how to articulate their thoughts and feelings successfully to others.

Most pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive the support that they need. At times, the school is slow to address the gaps that some pupils have in their phonics knowledge. This means that some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. Pupils read from books that are well matched to the sounds that they already know. This helps most pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

In recent times, the school has welcomed pupils with a wide range of complex needs. It provides these pupils with the specialist therapeutic support that they need. This provision has resulted in a significant improvement in the behaviour of some pupils. They learn how to better regulate their emotions. As a result, pupils learn in purposeful and calm classrooms. The school works closely with parents and carers to understand and address any barriers that may prevent pupils from attending school. Most pupils attend school regularly.

The school takes great care to ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that make a strong contribution to their wider development. Pupils know how to care for their physical and mental health and how to keep themselves safe. They value the differences that exist between people. They know the signs of healthy relationships. They benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education. Strong links with local colleges ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the performance of the school. They receive detailed information about the school that helps them to carry out their statutory and strategic duties effectively. Staff feel supported and carry out their roles with a high degree of integrity. They have welcomed recent changes to assessment that have helped to improve their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school does not promptly address the gaps that some pupils have in their phonics knowledge. When this happens, these pupils struggle to segment and blend sounds independently, and this prevents them from becoming confident and fluent readers. The school should ensure that staff receive the support that they need to implement the phonics curriculum effectively so that pupils are well prepared for the reading demands of the next stage in their education.

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 October 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	119878
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10294339
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Williams
Headteacher	Peter Higham
Website	www.great-arley.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan.
- The school provides for pupils with autism, moderate learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading and communication, mathematics, and the vocational curriculum, including design and

technology. For each deep dive, the 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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with the local authority adviser.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, the curriculum, assessment, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils in discussions throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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