Inspection of an outstanding school: Melland High School

Gorton Education Village, 50 Wembley Road, Gorton, Greater Manchester M18 7DT

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 March 2024

Outcome

Melland High School continues to be an outstanding school.

The principal of this school is Sue Warner. This school is part of Bright Futures Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), John Stephens, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Daniel Rubin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Melland High School is an inspirational and vibrant place. Pupils flourish socially and academically. The school is ambitious for every pupil. Pupils know that their views and opinions matter. They develop effective strategies that enable them to communicate with confidence. Pupils feel safe, happy and well cared for.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Expectations for their achievements are high, no matter what pathway they follow. Determined staff do everything that they can to ensure that pupils enjoy school and that they benefit from a carefully adapted curriculum. Pupils thrive personally and academically.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Highly effective classroom and social time routines mean that pupils know exactly what to expect and when. This helps pupils to feel calm and secure, and it adds to the harmonious atmosphere that pervades throughout the school.

At the heart of the school's work is the continual focus on equipping pupils with the skills that they need to make a valuable contribution to society. This is also true for students in the sixth form. Right from the start, the wider experiences offered to pupils focus on developing their independence and social skills. This offer includes activities such as outdoor pursuits, theatre trips and performing arts projects.

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

Pupils receive an ambitious curriculum. This covers a broad range of subjects and enrichment through intelligently designed curriculum pathways. Within each, the school has coherently mapped out the ambitious knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should

learn over time. Importantly, pupils follow a curriculum that is highly personalised to their individual needs. This helps all pupils, including those with profound and complex needs, to learn well.

There are thoughtful learning environments to suit each learning pathway. Staff draw extensively on the information in pupils' EHC plans to design engaging and appropriate activities. They use this information to adapt curriculum delivery responsively. Additionally, they check that pupils receive the right resources and equipment to help them to enjoy their experience in the classroom. Staff model new learning clearly and break it down in ways that pupils understand. Assessment is continually used to fine-tune pupils' learning. Across subjects, learning is frequently revisited to ensure that pupils build their knowledge over time.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' reading, language and communication skills. Staff work closely with speech and language therapists. They are trained in the use of a wide range of techniques and communication strategies and tools. Pupils learn to answer questions and express their desires and requests. Reading is used extensively. For example, staff create social stories to help pupils to relate to the world around them. Staff are highly trained in skilfully teaching the school's phonics programme. Pupils read from books that are matched to the sounds that they already know. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils attend well. Staff develop strong and trusting relationships with pupils. They have a deep knowledge of their needs. Extensive training in behaviour management enables staff to respond sensitively and kindly when pupils feel overwhelmed or become dysregulated. Classrooms are typically hives of activity, where pupils relish their learning.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. Staff make the most of every opportunity to teach pupils the skills that they will need later in life. For example, students in the sixth form benefit from learning how to take a bus, write a shopping list and join a gym. Pupils have a rich understanding of respect, tolerance and diversity. For example, they represent the school in city-wide initiatives, where they are proud to talk about special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and inclusion. Pupils develop their leadership skills as house captains and student leaders.

Education about next steps, careers and the world of work is interwoven into all that the school does. Careers events provide pupils with meaningful encounters with local employers. Students in the sixth form, where appropriate, benefit from carefully selected programmes of work experience, vocational pathways and independent living skills.

Trustees and governors have strong strategic oversight of the school. They offer highly effective support and challenge to the school. Leaders at all levels are open and reflective. Staff said they are valued and supported well to develop and share their expertise. They work as a team and are proud to work at the 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 February 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	138532
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10268787
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	72
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Daniel Rubin
CEO of trust	John Stephens
Principal	Sue Warner
Website	www.melland.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined Bright Futures Education Trust in August 2012.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Places are commissioned by local authorities.
- The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism.
- 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 principal and with other school leaders. They also spoke with members of the trust board, including the CEO of the trust. Additionally, they spoke with the local governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, history, and personal, social, health and economic education. 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 evaluated the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss SEND provision 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 via Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Angela Spencer-Brooke	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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