

Inspection of an outstanding school: Wirral Hospitals' School

157 Park Road North, Claughton, Wirral, Merseyside CH41 0DD

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 April 2024

Outcome

Wirral Hospitals' School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this warm and inclusive school. They benefit from a culture that celebrates difference. Pupils join the school having had difficulties in previous settings. Here, they rebuild their trust in adults and their optimism for the future.

Pupils enjoy exceptionally strong, caring relationships with adults who know them very well. This helps pupils to feel happy. They know that there is always an adult available to support them if they are worried.

Staff are passionate about providing the very best education for pupils. There is no ceiling to the school's high ambitions for what pupils can achieve. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly. They are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps in education.

Pupils are extremely respectful of others. They behave in an exemplary manner around school, and they are excellent role models for their peers. Staff are experts at noticing when pupils experience distress or discomfort. They respond quickly and sensitively.

Pupils enjoy impressive opportunities that promote their wider development. They delight in enrichment activities such as gardening, running, cooking and theatre productions. The chance to participate in a residential trip helps pupils to discover their hidden strengths and to develop their independence and resilience.

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

The school has designed an exceptionally ambitious curriculum. This curriculum is highly developed and reflects a strong resolve that every pupil will achieve all that they possibly can. It also helps pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Teachers are confident in the subjects that they teach. They pride themselves on finding inventive and interesting ways to explain new ideas clearly. This helps pupils to remember important learning. Teachers skilfully use the information that they have about each pupil to break learning down into small, manageable steps. They have a thorough understanding of how to adapt the delivery of the curriculum for each pupil.

Learning goals in pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plan) are interwoven into all aspects of the curriculum. As a result, pupils build their confidence well and they flourish in their learning.

Reading has a particularly high profile in this school. There is an excellent understanding of where pupils are in their reading development. Adults provide highly effective support for pupils who find reading difficult. For example, these pupils benefit from revisiting early reading strategies and developing their comprehension skills further. Staff's own passion for reading is infectious and in turn, fosters a love of reading among pupils. The well-stocked library is regularly used by pupils as a safe haven, where they can unwind and immerse themselves in books.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons. Many are highly motivated to learn. If struggling to concentrate, pupils are free to quietly step out of class. Most pupils join the school after having long periods of non-attendance in previous settings. The school analyses and tracks absence thoroughly. It is successful at re-engaging many pupils back into school. Staff do all that they can to re-establish positive attendance habits.

The school offers pupils many high-quality opportunities to develop themselves personally and to prepare themselves for life beyond school. For example, pupils learn communication and interaction strategies so that they have the skills and confidence to successfully manage a range of social situations.

Comprehensive and extremely well-thought-out careers education, information, advice and guidance are available to pupils. An annual enterprise week offers pupils the chance to see the huge range of professions and careers that are available to them. It also provides a taste of the world of work by providing them with real-life experiences to plan, promote, create and sell products. This amply reinforces the school's belief that there are no limits to what pupils can achieve.

Governors share the school's high ambition for pupils. Staff value the support that they receive for their workload and well-being. For example, they appreciate the time that they are given to develop an exciting and inspiring curriculum. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are determined to make a real difference to the lives of pupils and their families. Typically, parents said that the school is 'amazing' and a 'lifesaver' for their children and families.

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 November 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	105139
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10321261
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Catherine Dolmor
Headteacher	Phill Arrowsmith
Website	www.wirralhs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wirral Hospitals' School provides full-time education to pupils aged 11 to 17 on its main site. Pupils have significant mental and physical health needs, including severe anxiety and depression.
- All pupils have SEND. Some have EHC plans for social, emotional and mental health needs, speech, language and communication needs or for autism.
- The school is located at two sites. The main site is located at the Joseph Paxton Campus, 157 Park Road North, Claughton, Wirral, Merseyside, CH41 0DD. There is a second school site that is located at Arrowe Park Hospital, Children's Ward (Ward 52), Arrowe Park Road, Upton, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH49 5PE. The lead inspector visited both sites during this inspection.
- At the Arrowe Park Hospital site, the school provides educational input for children who are hospitalised there. These pupils typically stay no longer than 48 to 72 hours in hospital. Pupils can range from two to 17 years old.
- On the Department for Education's Get Information about Schools website, the school's age range is recorded as 11 to 17 years old. This is because only pupils at the Joseph Paxton Campus are registered with the school. Most pupils are dual registered with their previous school.

- 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.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

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 that 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: English (with a focus on reading), mathematics and personal, social and health education, including Learning for Life. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors spoke with some pupils about their learning. They also discussed the curriculum in some other 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 spoke with pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders. They also met with those responsible for SEND provision, pastoral care and careers advice and guidance.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, which focused on the well-being and safeguarding of pupils and also their own workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to school improvement.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gary Kelly

Ofsted 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