

Inspection of a good school: The Clifton Centre

117 Silverdale, Manchester M27 8GW

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 July 2024

Outcome

The Clifton Centre continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value their time at this school. Many of the pupils that inspectors spoke with credit the school for making a big difference to their education. They said that the school has given them hope and that it has made them optimistic for their future lives.

Pupils are safe and well cared for. They appreciate their professional and good-humoured relationships with staff. Pupils are comfortable sharing worries with staff, who deal with issues quickly and sensitively.

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic learning and their wider development. Over time, these expectations are typically realised. Pupils generally learn well. They make significant strides in their social and emotional development. In the main, pupils' behaviour improves. This contributes to the school's positive learning environment, which is usually calm and orderly.

Pupils value a flexible and personalised approach to their learning. They benefit from a strong focus on preparing them for life after school. This includes the thoughtful promotion of fundamental British values. For example, pupils recently participated in a mock general election to learn about democracy.

Pupils welcome various trips and enrichment opportunities. For instance, they recently visited a local library and a local museum, which helped to bring the school's subject curriculums to life.

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

The education that the school provides has become much more ambitious since the last inspection. Staff believe strongly that pupils are entitled to a broad and aspirational education in readiness for life in modern Britain. Alongside the curriculum, the school has

advanced its vocational offer considerably. Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and employability in areas such as carpentry, catering and construction.

In many subjects, the school has determined the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this should be taught. However, in some subjects, the school has thought less about what it wants pupils to learn over time. Occasionally, this makes it difficult for some pupils to gain a deep body of knowledge within these subjects.

Teachers know pupils very well. They use this knowledge to design learning activities that deliver the intended curriculum successfully. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully to establish what they have learned and to identify any gaps in their knowledge. Teachers use this information skilfully to adapt future learning. By the time that they move on from the school, most pupils have gained a broad suite of qualifications. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Most pupils proceed to appropriate destinations when they leave the school.

The school prioritises literacy. Across the curriculum, teachers focus on developing pupils' breadth of vocabulary. Staff provide pupils with frequent opportunities to practise their reading knowledge. The school has well-established strategies to assess how well pupils read. However, it has not thought sufficiently well about how to support pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge.

Staff quickly identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They carefully determine the additional needs that these pupils have, including their behavioural needs. The school works in partnership with a range of professionals, such as speech and language therapists and mental-health practitioners, to meet the needs of pupils with SEND successfully. This enables those with SEND to achieve well.

The school places a focus on re-engaging with those pupils who struggle the most to attend school. The school's outreach service bridges the gap between home and school. This, among other measures, helps many pupils to improve their attendance while at the school. Despite this, some other pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school does not use attendance information as well as it could. As a result, the strategy for securing good levels of attendance from all pupils is not as effective as it should be.

Pupils benefit from a thorough programme that supports their wider development. They are knowledgeable about different risks that they may encounter outside of school, such as substance misuse, criminal exploitation and violent crime.

The school ensures that staff receive the support and training that they need to meet pupils' needs. This supports staff's workload and well-being and allows staff to feel motivated and valued. Members of the governing body are knowledgeable. They oversee the school's work carefully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, curriculum thinking is undeveloped. In these subjects, teachers are unclear about the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. On occasion, this leads to a lack of clarity and cohesion in pupils' learning. The school should refine its curriculum thinking in these subjects, to determine the important knowledge that should be taught and when this should happen.
- The school does not provide additional support for pupils who find reading difficult. This impedes some pupils' ability to access the curriculum and to learn as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff are suitably equipped to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' reading knowledge.
- The school is not as systematic in its use of attendance information as it could be. This prevents a strategic and proactive approach in encouraging pupils' regular attendance. As a result, some pupils' rates of attendance remain low. The school should strengthen its strategy to ensure that these pupils' rates of attendance improve over time.

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 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 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	135504
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10294355
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue Woodgate
Headteacher	Alison Johnston
Website	www.thecliftoncentre.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly since the previous inspection. During this time, the school has moved to a new, purpose-built facility.
- 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 qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses eight unregistered alternative providers for pupils.
- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school. All pupils face challenges relating to their social, emotional or mental health. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Silverdale Federation along with another school. The executive headteacher and the governing body oversee both schools.

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 has 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 executive headteacher, the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He scrutinised minutes from governing body meetings and a sample of the information that the school gives to the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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.
- An inspector spoke with staff from two alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including reading, science, construction and catering. In these subjects, they spoke with subject leaders and looked at pupils' work. Where possible, they held discussions with pupils and visited lessons. An inspector also looked at a sample of pupils' work in mathematics.
- Inspectors spoke with staff. They also met with groups of pupils, including some who had recently left the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They also observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the site. Inspectors looked at the school's records relating to pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors reviewed free-text comments from parents through Ofsted Parent View. There were not enough responses for the full results to be shown. Inspectors considered evidence of the views of parents provided by the school. This included email correspondence and the results of the school's own surveys.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils to consider.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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