

Inspection of a good school: Childwall Abbey School

Childwall Abbey Road, Childwall, Liverpool, Merseyside L16 5EY

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

Childwall Abbey School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They relish the exciting curriculum, with its focus on learning outside of the classroom. For example, pupils learn about nature through visits to the local woods. They develop their understanding of the differences between the city and the coast.

The school has high aspirations for its pupils. It harnesses pupils' talents, for example in art, music and technology. Pupils are encouraged to follow their dreams. Staff work with pupils to support them to achieve their ambitions. Students in the sixth form can choose to undertake a supported internship. This helps some students to progress into apprenticeships or work. Pupils achieve qualifications including GCSEs in Year 11. These pupils move successfully into college, work or training.

The school has considerably increased the number of pupils on roll in the last few years. However, the mission statement remains at the heart of the school. The school continues to be a place where 'everyone supports each other to achieve'. Pupils learn to accept each other for who they are. They understand that all pupils are different. Pupils said that sometimes a small number of their classmates can struggle with managing their behaviour. However, they know that staff will help and support them with this.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Pupils study a wide range of national curriculum subjects. Pupils can also achieve in other areas, for example in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and in courses in hair and beauty or construction. Most pupils achieve qualifications and are ready for the next stage in their education, employment or training when they leave the school.

The school has responded to the local need for additional places for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has accepted a high number of new pupils with a wider range of SEND than has previously been the case over time. The

school has managed this process well. However, there is more work to do to ensure that the school can meet this wider range of needs and ensure that all pupils achieve their personal and academic potential.

Teachers know pupils extremely well. They ensure that access to the curriculum is adapted so that most pupils can learn successfully. For example, noise levels are considered for pupils with sensory needs. Resources are chosen that capture pupils' attention and ignite their interest. Staff use a range of assessment strategies to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before they move on in their learning.

Learning support staff also play a key role in classrooms. They support pupils with their learning as well as their social and emotional needs. They know how to respond to pupils' individual behaviours and understand that some pupils will need different approaches to help them to regulate their behaviour. For example, some pupils need quiet encouragement while other pupils may need a sensory break.

The school's focused drive to improve reading is having a strong impact. Pupils enjoy reading stories, poems, plays and non-fiction texts. This has also improved pupils' debating and discussion skills. Pupils gain confidence to air their opinions and listen to an opposite view with courtesy and respect. The school has invested in a wide range of age-appropriate and exciting books. This allows pupils at the early stage of reading to practise their letters and sounds using books which contain the sounds that they are learning.

The school has an effective strategy to improve pupils' attendance. A high number of pupils have had considerable periods of absence in their previous schools. This school unpicks any barriers to attendance and, over time, pupils' attendance improves as a result.

The school pays due regard to pupils' personal development. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is intrinsically connected to the wider curriculum. For example, pupils learn the biology of puberty in their science lessons. They also discuss the emotional and behavioural impact of puberty as part of the PSHE curriculum. In careers, pupils learn which personal skills are important in the workplace. Assemblies are used effectively to strengthen pupils' knowledge around other cultures and human rights. Pupils develop a secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including online. They also understand their rights and responsibilities.

The governing body has a wide range of skills and expertise. It knows the challenges that the school has faced through the increase in pupil numbers. Governors are eager to work with the school, the local authority and other stakeholders to ensure that all pupils in the school receive a good quality of education.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. They feel listened to and valued. They also appreciate that they have access to independent well-being support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At the time of the inspection, a robust plan was not in place to ensure that the school can meet the increasingly wide range of pupils' needs resulting from the recent growth in pupil numbers. This means that a minority of pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school and governors should work closely with the local authority and all stakeholders to ensure that the school meets the needs of all pupils equally well.

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 February 2015.

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	134658
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10321410
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	213
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gill Rogerson
Headteacher	Cath Piercy
Website	childwallabbeysschool.net
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased from 130 to 213.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers and one unregistered alternative provider for pupils.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with specific learning difficulty, visual impairment, other difficulty/disabilities, hearing impairment, speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health needs, multi-sensory impairment, physical disability, moderate learning difficulty and severe learning difficulty.
- 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 headteacher and senior school leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector also spoke with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, art and design, and design and technology (food technology and resistant materials). For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including policies and analyses of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils and staff about the school. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lunchtime and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey to consider.
- Inspectors also considered the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with some parents.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gil Bourgade

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