

Inspection of Percy Hedley School

West Lane, Killingworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE12 7BH

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a rich and fulfilling education at Percy Hedley School. An unrelenting culture of ambition and care underpins all that happens in the school. Adults have high expectations for each pupil's academic learning and personal development. Pupils are eager to meet these expectations.

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school team work tirelessly to ensure that any barriers to learning are overcome. Timely therapeutic care supports pupils to access their education. This enables pupils to achieve exceptionally well. Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners.

From early years onwards, staff who understand the various ways in which pupils communicate, support pupils to express their thoughts and feelings. Pupils learn to interact with people and the world around them. When ready, pupils receive thoughtful support to move onto further education and employment. The extensive personal development programme and tailored careers provision is aspirational for all pupils. This school is focused on giving pupils the very best start in life.

Staff and pupils are highly respectful of each other. Pupils behave exceptionally well because they know exactly what is expected of them. The school is a calm and orderly place where pupils feel safe. Pupils learn to be proud of themselves and consistently strive to achieve their very best.

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

The school identifies pupils' needs very well. This begins before pupils enter the school. Adults consider the available information about each pupil carefully. This includes pupils' education, health and care plans. They ensure that pupils' communication, social and emotional and learning needs are met well.

Pupils study one of four pathways tailored to their specific needs. The multi-disciplinary teams plan bespoke learning adaptations for each pupil. The ambitious curriculum supports all pupils and students to develop their independence. The school prepares pupils extremely well for their move into further education or employment.

A key strength of the school is the development of pupils' communication and interaction skills. From the early years, children learn to use different forms of communication confidently. For example, pupils learn to use signing, pictures and symbols to communicate effectively. Pupils with more profound needs learn to use digital tools to make choices, such as eye-driven communication devices. Staff are highly proficient in teaching pupils to use these approaches. As a result, pupils have a means to express their preferences and feelings successfully.

The teaching of reading is a high priority. The school promotes pupils' love of reading by immersing children in the early years in stories, rhymes and poems. For pupils who are not ready to learn phonics, adults help them to recognise and respond to sounds. When

pupils are ready, they access a structured phonics approach that is adapted to meet their individual needs. As a result, pupils develop their understanding of phonics well. Over time, pupils become increasingly confident and fluent readers. Staff are adept in supporting pupils' comprehension of texts. They introduce them to new words and the concepts that they represent.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons. They understand the school's well-established routines. Staff take time to discuss lesson transitions and to encourage pupils to take part in activities. They are highly successful in helping pupils, who need additional support, to regulate their emotions.

The school has a sharp focus on improving pupils' rates of attendance. The school's supportive actions are successful in encouraging pupils to attend school as often as they can. Most pupils attend regularly and on time.

Pupils' personal development is exceptional and preparation for adulthood threads through school life. Pupils receive impartial careers guidance. Transition events with parents, carers and pupils are valued highly. They provide effective support in making informed decisions about pupils' next steps. Pupils undertake work placements and develop independent travel skills in the local community. The school is highly creative in nurturing the talents and interests of pupils. They expose them to new experiences, such as taking part in the residential visit to the Lake District. Pupils develop confidence by participating in school productions and sporting activities.

Students in the sixth form study an ambitious curriculum that builds on prior learning. This includes the option of academic courses with national accreditations. Subject specialists adapt and personalise the curriculum so that students learn well. Students relish in having their own identified area within school. They develop a strong sense of purpose and belonging. Students interact well with each other in the social area. They also practise other life skills, such as making refreshments, independently.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They are very positive about the support they receive from leaders for their workload and well-being. Staff receive highly appropriate professional development and develop specialist expertise. School leaders at all levels make a significant contribution to continual school improvement and innovation. Leaders and staff have worked to further improve aspects of the school following the previous inspection to the school in 2023.

The governing body has an excellent understanding both of the school and the needs of the local area. Strategic investment has led to the recent creation of the early years unit. This is already providing younger children with an excellent start in life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	108657
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10346263
Type of school	All-through
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Janet Donnelly
Headteacher	John Steward
Website	phs.percyhedley.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Percy Hedley School is a special school for pupils aged between three and 19 years. The school is part of the Percy Hedley Foundation.
- The school makes provision for pupils with complex SEND. This includes those with speech, language and communication needs, physical disabilities and autism. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, pathway leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive of the foundation, representatives of the governing body and board of trustees. The lead inspector met with local authority school representatives.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and early reading, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. 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.
- 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.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses.

Inspection team

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christina Jones

Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Common

Ofsted Inspector

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