

# Inspection of Old Hall School

Bentley Lane, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 7LU

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Inspection dates:	10 and 11 December 2024
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Old Hall School achieve exceptionally well, starting from the early years. The school accurately understands pupils' barriers to learning. There are no limits placed to what pupils can achieve here. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for their next stages in education and development.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils. The curriculum has been carefully developed for pupils to meet these high expectations successfully. The school places high priority on developing pupils' communication and interaction. This is central to the school's curriculum. Pupils use different strategies to communicate their thoughts, feelings and subject knowledge effectively. This provides pupils with valuable skills for their future lives.

The support for pupils' behavioural needs is excellent. The school has developed the holistic intervention programme. This helps pupils who may need additional support for their behaviour. This is a highly effective and inclusive intervention. Consequently, pupils display positive and calm behaviours.

Pupils' mental health and well-being are supported exceptionally well. Pupils are taught how to understand their feelings. They know what strategies will help them to manage their emotions. Pupils share their worries around the 'tell me tree'. Pupils can name trusted adults. As a result, pupils are happy and safe at Old Hall School.

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

The curriculum is highly ambitious for all pupils. All curriculum areas are accurately planned to meet the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, in physical development, pupils' postural management and care are well embedded within this curriculum area. Pupils learn key knowledge and skills in a clear and logical way. There is a strong focus on subject-specific vocabulary, in addition to functional key words to help pupils to communicate. Pupils learn across different learning pathways. This helps pupils to learn alongside others with similar needs. The curriculum is embedded and secure across all learning pathways. Pupils' individual next steps in learning are shared and understood by all staff. As a result, pupils build their knowledge and skills exceptionally well.

The school understand how pupils' needs can change over time. Staff are highly skilled in identifying these changes early on. Systems for assessing and reviewing pupils' needs are highly effective. There is a strong partnership between school, parents, carers and external agencies. The school uses the expertise of other professionals, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, nurses and educational psychologists. This ensures that pupils' needs are met accurately and quickly.

Reading is highly prioritised across the school. Pupils love to read and listen to stories. There is a wide range of high-quality texts. The school has developed a bespoke reading system for pupils at the very early stages of reading and communication. This supports

pupils' attention, interaction and engagement. Pupils then move on to a structured phonics programme. Consequently, many pupils can read key texts independently and accurately by the time they move on to secondary school.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are impressive. Pupils are motivated to learn and to show visitors what they can do. The environment in class and across school is calm and orderly. Pastoral support is adapted for individual pupils' needs. Relationships across school are rooted in respect. Staff treat all pupils with great care and dignity. Pupils arrive at school in the morning with excitement. Leaders and governors successfully prioritise attendance.

High expectations are set from the very start in the early years. Careful transitions into school begin early on, prior to children starting. This means that adults have a secure understanding of children's needs. Routines and behaviours are established quickly and children respond extremely well. Staff are well trained to support children's communication and language needs. In lessons, children demonstrate sustained attention, anticipation and engagement in their learning. Furthermore, the knowledge and skills children learn in the early years prepare them well for their next stages into year 1.

The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school has carefully considered pupils' preparation for adulthood, starting from the earliest years. This includes feeding and drinking, making choices and exposure to the world of work through a careers week. Pupils have an impressive range of wider opportunities, including forest schools, planetariums and performing in front of parents. There are many opportunities for all pupils to engage in lunchtime activities, such as science and sensory development clubs. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures that make up Great Britain. They engage in charitable work outside of school. Pupils' talents and interests are well considered. All this supports pupils' character development exceptionally well.

The school is highly regarded by the local community and by the local authority. The school shares expert knowledge and practices with other professionals across the authority. Leaders and governors are committed to supporting pupils with the most complex needs and their families across Walsall. Staff are rightly proud to work at the school. All staff demonstrate the school's core values of positivity, opportunity, inclusiveness, kindness and togetherness at all times. These are embedded in every part of school 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104274
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322730
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Lesley Foster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Ball
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.old-hall.walsall.sch.uk">www.old-hall.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	28 and 29 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, Old Hall School is no longer federated with another school.
- The school's early years and key stage 1 provision will be expanding to another site in January 2025.
- Old Hall School is a specialist provider for pupils with complex needs, including autism spectrum condition, severe learning difficulties, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

## 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 pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the chair of governors, governors, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked with parents and carers. Inspectors also talked informally with transport assistants, drivers and staff.
- The lead inspector met with a local authority representative and a school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, communication and interaction and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at additional subjects, including computing and English.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- 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 considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

## **Inspection team**

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Amjid Zaman

Ofsted Inspector

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