

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hope School

251 Hartsbourne Avenue, Liverpool, Merseyside L25 2RY

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

Outcome

Hope School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, who all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thrive at Hope School. It is an inspirational place where pupils flourish both socially and academically. Staff ensure that pupils settle in quickly and well, despite pupils often having a disruptive educational experience prior to attending this school. Pupils are made to feel a part of this small school community. Staff are ambitious for pupils. There is a strong culture driven by the school's motto, 'If I try, I can'. The school focuses relentlessly on ensuring that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding diminish. This helps pupils to achieve exceptionally well from when they join the school.

Hope School is a calm oasis for pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly positive and fundamental to pupils' impressive behaviour. They are built around mutual trust. Staff understand each individual pupil's needs well. When pupils need additional support, highly trained staff provide expert guidance to them. They help pupils to regulate their emotions with respect and dignity. Over time, pupils experience success in managing their own behaviour.

Pupils experience a striking range of extra-curricular activities, which helps to prepare them for life beyond school. The extensive programme of activities and experiences helps pupils to develop self-belief and confidence. For example, pupils have the chance to attend different residential which help them to practise life skills.

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

The school's curriculum is extremely effective. It is intelligently designed and organised around three areas that reflect pupils' distinct needs. Firstly, the important initial stage of the curriculum supports pupils to be ready to learn. The next two stages clearly set out

the knowledge that the school wishes pupils to learn and by when. Teachers use assessment information exceptionally well to identify where pupils have gaps in their understanding. They use this knowledge, alongside their understanding of the curriculum, to work out for pupils what their next step is. Over time, this is extremely effective. From their individual starting points, pupils successfully build up a rich body of knowledge.

The school is alert to identify any further areas where pupils might need additional support. Alongside the information from the pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plan, the school sets appropriate targets for pupils. These targets are woven strategically into the curriculum. Well-trained staff skilfully adapt their approaches to ensure that pupils access the curriculum successfully.

The school places a high priority on ensuring that pupils can read fluently. If pupils join the school without the necessary skills, this is prioritised. Pupils access a carefully structured phonics programme to help them to develop their early reading skills. Staff deliver this well and pupils are successful. This helps pupils to develop into confident, fluent readers over time.

Pupils behave well in lessons, when they move around the school building and during playtimes. Teachers are experts in delivering the curriculum for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. They know how to 'hook' pupils into their learning. Pupils' attitudes are unfalteringly positive. Pupils' attendance is high. In part, this is because the school works effectively with parents.

The unwavering focus on promoting pupils' personal development results in pupils who know that they can be successful in life. The school carefully considers the way that personal, social, health and economic education is woven into the curriculum. Relationships education is entwined into the curriculum to ensure that pupils learn how to form effective relationships with others. Pupils understand different fundamental British values well. They particularly have a deep understanding of equality and how they should respect any differences between people and families. Pupils enjoy opportunities to have leadership roles in school. They take these roles seriously and are proud to support their school.

Governors are highly committed and passionate about the school. They bring a range of knowledge and skills to their role. They use this to support and challenge the school to be the best that it can be. The school supports staff with their workload and well-being in equal measure. When changes are put into place, the school does this in a way that does not impact staff's workload negatively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness 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	133421
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10348235
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Blythe
Headteacher	Maxine O'Neill
Website	www.hopeschool-liverpool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 April 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. The school supports pupils who have SEMH difficulties.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with school leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and as pupils moved around the school building. They scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. In addition, the lead inspector met with a group of parents during the school day.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Ruddy

Ofsted Inspector

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