Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: David Lewis School

Mill Lane, Warford, Alderley Edge, Cheshire SK9 7UD

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 January 2025

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

David Lewis School is a place where pupils, who have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are happy and feel valued. The school helps pupils to develop socially and emotionally in a caring environment. Pupils rise to the high expectations set by the school and achieve well.

Prior to attending the school, many pupils have not had a successful educational experience. Staff foster trusting and nurturing relationships with pupils. This helps to reassure pupils and to improve their behaviour over time. Pupils learn to respect differences between people. They allow their peers to contribute ideas in lessons.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about a variety of activities that they can take part in, such as swimming, walking, sports and cycling. These promote their mental health and well-being. Pupils gain valuable work-related skills by helping to run the school shop and the 'Doggylicious' dog grooming parlour. Visits to local supermarkets to purchase food for cooking enable pupils to develop their communication skills, confidence and independence.

Pupils on the school council have a voice in decision-making in the school. They organise the lunchtime club, vote for specific trips and decide on themes for events, such as the summer ball and Christmas party.

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

The school has high aspirations for its pupils. The school provides four flexible and ambitious curriculum pathways that are personalised to meet pupils' needs. Pupils' additional needs are promptly identified. A team of medical, therapeutic and specialist

staff work effectively to remove or manage any physical, sensory or health barriers that pupils may face. Overall, pupils progress well through the curriculum.

The school has overhauled many subject curriculums. In most subjects, the knowledge that pupils need to learn has been clearly identified. This allows pupils to build on their learning. However, in some subjects that have been recently refined, curriculum changes are still being embedded. As a result, pupils' understanding of some subject content is not as secure.

Typically, staff implement the curriculum well. They use information from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans to adapt the delivery of the curriculum. Staff introduce learning in clear and manageable steps. This helps pupils to understand concepts more easily. In the main, staff check pupils' understanding and address any errors or misconceptions well. However, in some subjects, the school is still refining its checks on what pupils know and remember. This occasionally can affect how well pupils learn new content.

Communication and language development are at the heart of what the school does. Staff skilfully use a variety of resources, such as symbols, photos and assistive technology. This helps pupils to make choices, express their thoughts and develop independence. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are provided with tailored support. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly. This is helping them to catch up and build their confidence in reading.

Staff are skilled at managing situations where some pupils may demonstrate challenging behaviour. Staff use well-considered strategies to help pupils manage their feelings and emotions. This helps pupils to refocus on their learning. The school is a calm and positive environment. Pupils enjoy eating lunch together with staff. This fosters a sense of belonging among the close-knit school community.

The school monitors pupils' attendance carefully and uses a range of effective strategies to make sure that pupils attend school regularly. The school provides helpful support for those pupils who face difficulties in attending school, including those with medical needs.

Pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. Pupils benefit from high-quality careers education and guidance. The school has developed strong partnerships with a range of colleges and employers, including the supported employment sector. This supports pupils to have a successful transition for their next steps. Pupils learn important topics, such as healthy relationships, healthy living and democracy. They celebrate different cultures and learn about diversity. However, there are limited opportunities to learn about various religions and faiths. This means that some pupils are not as well prepared for life in modern Britain as they could be.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They agree that the school is mindful of their workload and supports their well-being. Governors, together with the chief executive officer (CEO), are committed to ensuring high standards for pupils. They have supported

the school's recent expansion in pupil numbers. Governors ask appropriate questions to understand the school's strengths and work with the school to improve it further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, changes to the curriculum and methods for checking pupils' learning are not fully embedded. In these subjects, pupils have some gaps in their prior knowledge, and this affects how well they learn new curriculum content. The school should ensure that the revised curriculums and assessment strategies are fully embedded so that pupils' knowledge is secure and they achieve well.
- Some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about different faiths and beliefs. As a result, they are not as prepared as they could be for life in modern Britain. The school should ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to develop their knowledge about different religions and faiths so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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 to be good 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 good for overall effectiveness in December 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	111499
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10321326
Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Vicky Halliwell
Principal	Angie Fisher
Website	www.davidlewis.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a non-maintained special school and is part of the David Lewis organisation.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including moderate to profound learning disabilities, neurological conditions, including epilepsy and autism and associated communication, sensory impairments, behavioural and health needs.
- The school currently provides education for pupils aged 11 to 19. Some of the pupils in the sixth form live on site.
- Pupils are admitted from a wide geographical area that includes 28 local authorities in England and Wales. The main local authority involved with the school is Cheshire East.

- Since the last inspection, a new head of school and two new assistant headteachers have been appointed. In addition, there have been some changes in the membership of the governing body, including a new chair.
- The school does not make use of 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

- 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 spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with the CEO of the David Lewis organisation and the chair of the governing body. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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' interest first.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at break time and lunchtime. A very small number of responses were received to Ofsted's pupil survey, so it was not possible to make any meaningful evaluation of these.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by parents and carers through Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector

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