

Inspection of a good school: Hillside Specialist School and College

Ribchester Road, Longridge, Preston, Lancashire PR3 3XB

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

Hillside Specialist School and College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this calm and welcoming school. Staff welcome them with kind words and a smile at the start of each day. Pupils benefit from the positive relationships that they have with adults who know them well. Staff take great care to ensure that pupils settle in quickly when they first join the school. Pupils are happy.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They respond well to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievements and conduct. Pupils achieve well.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of experiences that make a significant contribution to their wider development. For example, they develop their talents and interests through the 'sing and sign' choir, swimming and competitive sports events at local schools. Pupils enjoy a wide range of trips, such as to cities, local amenities and residential visits where they take part in outdoor pursuits.

Pupils benefit from a rewarding programme of work experience in the local community. As members of the school council, they make a significant contribution to the life of the school. Pupils become resilient and independent young people. They are extremely well prepared for adulthood.

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

The school has worked with the governing body to establish a culture where everyone is valued and included. Governors understand the school's performance accurately. They use this information well to assure themselves about the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively.

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. In the early years, children make a strong start to their time at school. By the end of key stage 4, pupils move on to a wide range of courses at local colleges. The school takes

great care to ensure that pupils make a successful transition at each stage of their education.

Students in the sixth form benefit from a range of programmes that help them to build up the skills that they need to make a positive contribution to their community. They typically gain a suite of qualifications that prepare them well for further study, the world of work or volunteering.

Staff use their subject knowledge effectively to create activities that help most pupils to learn the curriculum well. In most subjects, the important knowledge that pupils should acquire is set out clearly. However, this is not the case for a small number of subjects. In these subjects, staff are not as clear as they should be about what they should teach and when. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Some of the school's assessment strategies are at the early stages of development. At times, this means that the gaps and misconceptions that some pupils develop are not addressed in a timely manner. As a result, some pupils do not develop sufficient depth of understanding in these subjects.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Staff provide these pupils with experiences that enable them to learn successfully alongside their peers.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' reading, language and communication skills. Pupils with communication needs receive personalised and focused support. This includes the use of sign language, visual aids and modern technology. As a result, pupils learn how to successfully articulate their thoughts and feelings to others.

Pupils at the early stages of learning to read receive the timely support that they need to develop their phonics knowledge. They read from books that are well matched to the sounds that they already know. This helps these pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils receive the support that they need to develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They learn in purposeful and calm classrooms. Most pupils attend school regularly. This is because the school works closely with parents and carers to understand and address any barriers that may prevent pupils from attending school.

The school's personal development programme provides pupils with an impressive range of powerful experiences. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. They know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils value the many differences that exist between people. The school provides pupils with careers education that is tailored specifically to their needs and aspirations. This helps pupils to pursue their ambitions at carefully matched destinations once they leave school.

Staff appreciate the consideration that the school has for their workload. The training that they receive helps them to carry out their roles effectively. Staff value the thought that

the school has for their well-being. Parents have a positive view of the school. They appreciate the information that the school provides about their children's achievements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not thought about the important information that pupils should learn. As a result, some pupils do not learn the curriculum in sufficient depth. The school should provide staff with the information that they need so that they know precisely the content that pupils should learn and when this should be taught.
- Some of the agreed assessment strategies are still being determined by the school. This means that some pupils have gaps and misconceptions in their learning. This hinders how well these pupils achieve. The school should refine its approach to these assessment strategies to enable staff to check that pupils are achieving as well as they should.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

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	131479
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10269027
Type of school	Special
School category	Community 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	109
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emily Fraser
Headteacher	Paul Leaper
Website	www.hillside.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan.
- The school provides for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school has nursery provision for children aged between three and four years old.
- 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 inspection judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection that 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading and communication, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with the local authority secondary school improvement lead and a local authority adviser.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss SEND, the curriculum, assessment, pupils' behaviour and attitudes and the provision for pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They considered responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They 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 during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Hollister

Ofsted Inspector

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