

Inspection of a good school: Hamilton Academy

Barthomley Road, Birches Head, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST1 6NW

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2022

Outcome

Hamilton Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Hamilton Academy are happy, motivated learners. They take advantage of all the school has to offer. Pupils work hard in lessons and enjoy playing together. They take on positions of responsibility, such as playleaders, and support and encourage each other.

Leaders and staff work as a team to ensure that pupils are 'MAGIC': the attributes of motivation, attitude, gumption, independence and communication are threaded throughout every moment of the day. Staff have high expectations of pupils. They support the pupils to be the best in everything they do. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They show respect to those around them. Pupils say bullying does not really happen as everyone tries to be a good friend. Pupils trust adults to help sort out any friendship issues. Staff are quick to deal with any low-level disruptions that may occur. Pupils are kept safe.

Leaders, staff and governors work hard to ensure that pupils' personal development is carefully considered and planned for. Visits and sporting activities are used to develop character and raise aspirations. For example, pupils take part in a sports day with other local schools at Northwood Stadium.

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

Leaders have rightly focused on the quality of education and what pupils are learning through the curriculum. Subject leaders develop their subjects with support from senior leaders, and the trust. Pupils get a good start to school. Careful thought has been given to building on the knowledge and skills children gain in the early years. The curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for moving on to their next school.

From the moment children start at school they learn songs and nursery rhymes, and listen to stories. Parental workshops and videos help parents and carers support their children in learning key rhymes. These and other activities help children develop a love of reading

and an understanding of stories and characters. Skilful teaching ensures that children begin learning phonics well in Nursery. In Reception, children begin to read books that match the sounds they know. Sharp, focused support is quickly provided to any pupil who struggles. The library is at the heart of the school. Appropriate books and daily reading support children to become confident readers. Pupils enjoy the way in which staff enthusiastically model reading during story time. A strong reading culture is evident throughout the school.

In other subjects, including mathematics and geography, staff are very clear about what to teach, and when and how to teach it. Children learn mathematical skills, so they are prepared for their next stage of learning. Meaningful links are made through other subjects. In the Nursery, children were beginning to recognise and write the number 5. Children successfully counted five objects and placed five cars on the interactive whiteboard. Effective use is made of learning outside the classroom. For example, children make 'seed balls' for the birds to eat, linked to their topic on weather and the seasons.

Leaders ensure that staff have training and development opportunities. Staff appreciate the chance to develop their skills and deepen their knowledge. Curriculum leaders support this by working alongside and coaching staff. Where needed, teachers make adaptations to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in mathematics additional adults support learning, so all pupils are included.

Leaders are developing the assessments they make in several subjects. Assessments in geography, for example, do not capture the prior knowledge of learners or what each pupil has learned at the end of a topic. Effective provision for higher-attaining pupils is evident in English, mathematics and science. However, this is not the case in other subjects.

Pupils are encouraged to stay fit and healthy, for example through regular skipping at playtimes. Pupils visit their local church and local mosque when learning about different religions. They visit Manchester Airport as part of a topic on travel and transport. They take part in community events, including a scarecrow festival. These carefully planned experiences ensure that pupils widen their learning beyond the classroom.

Leaders manage and support staff well. Staff say that a focus on well-being and workload has helped the team. Staff feel respected and are proud to work at the school. Parents also say good things about the school. They comment on the clear communication they receive. They particularly like the way pupils are greeted by staff every morning.

Governors and trustees fulfil their statutory duties well. The trust is providing effective challenge and support to leaders. The school's self-evaluation of its work is realistic and accurate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work as an effective team to keep pupils safe. They are well trained and know exactly what to do, who to talk to and how to record any concerns. Leaders act quickly to provide support for vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders and governors check that staff are suitable before they begin work at the school.

Leaders maintain a focus on pupils' well-being. They ensure that pupils are taught about the difference between friendship difficulties and bullying. Pupils talk confidently about how to stay safe when using the internet or when crossing a road.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not fully understand how well the intended curriculum in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is being learned. The school's approach to assessment is not as well developed as it needs to be. As a result, the curriculum for higher-attaining pupils is not matched as well as it could be to their needs. Leaders should ensure that assessment in these subjects is refined, and enable teachers to use the information effectively to plan and deliver learning that deepens the knowledge of higher-attaining pupils.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Hamilton School, to be good in October 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143484
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10212182
Type of school	Nursery and Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	145
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Atkins
Principal	Yvonne Glaister
Website	http://www.hamilton.stoke.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Hamilton School converted to become an academy in September 2017. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall. The school is now part of the ESPRIT Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, the deputy principal, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and class teachers. The inspector also met with representatives from the local governing body and from the trust.
- Deep dives were carried out into reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at the curriculum and spoke to leaders about their subjects. The inspector conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and wider school experiences and looked at a range of pupils' work.

- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of safeguarding information, including the school's policy. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. The inspector spoke to the safeguarding lead and members of the school's pastoral team about recording and reporting of any safeguarding incidents.
- The inspector checked the school's website.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff on Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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