

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

Carfield, Clay Brow, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 9DP

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 June 2025

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this school. They are calm, kind and courteous. Pupils value the extremely positive relationships that they have with staff, who care for them exceptionally well. Pupils are first-rate ambassadors for their school. They represent their school with a high level of pride. Pupils are happy.

All of the pupils at this school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school makes the promotion of their social and emotional development a priority. As a result, most pupils rise to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievement. Pupils display conduct that is consistently impeccable.

Pupils make the most of the opportunities that the school provides for them. Activities such as strategy gaming, outdoor learning, sports and music clubs help pupils to further their talents and interests.

Trips to the theatre, the zoo and local businesses help pupils to develop their understanding of the world. Pupils deepen their understanding of the subjects that they study through cultural visits. For example, pupils learn about Shakespeare when they make an overnight visit to Stratford-upon-Avon. During residential stays, pupils take part in outdoor and adventurous activities, which help them to develop confidence and independence.

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

Governors and the school have worked together to create an environment where everyone is welcomed and valued. The school has a detailed and accurate view of its

performance. It sets and meets ambitious targets that are consistently in the best interests of pupils.

Pupils benefit from the ambitious curriculum that the school has designed. They learn a broad range of subjects. A selection of vocational pathways set pupils up well for further study. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education. Most pupils move on to meaningful destinations that include further education, apprenticeships or employment with training.

In most subjects, staff have strong subject knowledge. The activities they design and the checks that they make on what pupils know and remember help pupils to achieve well. However, in some subjects, at times, teaching does not address gaps or misconceptions that pupils have in their learning. When this happens, pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. In addition, some of the activities that pupils complete are not matched to their needs sufficiently well. Some pupils do not build on what they know and can do securely and do not achieve as well as they could.

The school's comprehensive approach to transition ensures that it quickly identifies any additional needs that pupils may have beyond those set out in their education, health and care (EHC) plan. Staff appreciate the extensive package of training and information that they receive, which helps them to meet the needs of each pupil in their care. Staff feel that this also supports their well-being.

The school prioritises pupils' reading and communication needs. Pupils who need support with their reading receive the help that they need to become confident and fluent readers. The books that pupils read make a strong contribution to their understanding of the world. For example, they learn about conflict, the importance of caring for others and respect for the differences that may exist between people.

The development of pupils' emotional intelligence has been central to the school's success in improving their achievement. Pupils learn to regulate their own emotions quickly. As a result, pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards their learning. Most pupils attend well. The support that the school has provided for a small number of pupils, who found attending school more difficult, has helped to improve their attendance.

The provision for pupils' personal development demonstrates the school's commitment to developing well-rounded, resilient young people who are ready to make the most of life in modern Britain. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. As school councillors and well-being champions, pupils make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers education that prepares them exceptionally well for adulthood.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the school designs activities that do not help pupils to develop a secure knowledge of the subjects that they study. This prevents some pupils from achieving as well as they could. The school should ensure that it supports staff to design learning activities that prepare pupils well for each step in their education.
- Occasionally, in some subjects, the school does not identify and address gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge as well as it could. When this happens, pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. The school should ensure that teaching identifies and addresses any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' learning consistently well so that pupils build their knowledge securely over time.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in December 2019.

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	119898
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10366744
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matthew Walker
Headteacher	Helen Dunbavin (executive headteacher) Leanne Fletcher (head of school)
Website	www.hopehighschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 19 December 2019, 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 social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school makes use of 10 unregistered alternative provisions for pupils.
- 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss provision for pupils with SEND, the curriculum, assessment, reading, 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 Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- 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 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

Michelle Beard

Ofsted Inspector

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