

Inspection of a good school: Dorin Park School & Specialist SEN College

Wealstone Lane, Upton, Chester, Cheshire CH2 1HD

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

Dorin Park School & Specialist SEN College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto, 'Learning together, growing together', underpins all that it does. Each morning, staff enthusiastically welcome pupils into school. Pupils feel safe and happy. They said that staff are approachable and caring. Many pupils build positive relationships with their peers and with staff. They behave well during lessons and around school. Skilled staff support pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour.

The school has high aspirations for its pupils. It supports pupils in developing their confidence and resilience as they move through the school. Pupils are polite and respectful. From their individual starting points, they make positive progress through the curriculum.

Pupils develop their independence and they are well prepared for adulthood. For example, they take part in travel training and they acquire useful shopping skills. Older pupils undertake off- and on-site work experience. Staff value pupils' opinions. For example, the pupil council influences school initiatives, such as improving lunchtime menus and playground equipment.

Pupils benefit from an array of learning experiences, including residential trips and visits. They enjoy going to parks and to pantomimes. Pupils participate in a variety of clubs, such as in sing and sign, dance and craft.

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

The school is ambitious for its pupils. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has designed four flexible curriculum pathways. It has reviewed and identified the building blocks of knowledge that it wants pupils to learn, from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 13. Pupils build their knowledge in a logical order. Older pupils benefit from vocational courses that help them to develop their practical skills. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum.

The school promptly identifies the additional needs of pupils. Staff use pupils' individual education, health and care (EHC) plans effectively to ensure that the curriculum is suitably adjusted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils profit from a personalised package of therapeutic and sensory support. This helps them to overcome their individual barriers. Pupils develop important skills, including large-muscle skills, balance and coordination.

Staff mostly deliver the curriculum well. Teachers design meaningful and interesting learning experiences that motivate pupils. Teachers typically use a wide range of assessment strategies to check what pupils understand and address any misconceptions that may arise. The school is in the process of reviewing the implementation of some recently developed foundation subjects. It is taking effective steps to strengthen the monitoring of the quality of the delivery of these curriculums.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' communication skills. Staff support pupils to understand and express their emotions, sensory needs and regulation preferences using a range of effective strategies. These strategies include verbal reinforcement and use of visual aids, such as pictures, signs, and symbols. The school's strategies successfully help pupils to engage with their learning.

The school has made reading a priority. Children are introduced to sounds, through songs and rhymes, as soon as they start in the Reception class. Most pupils read from books that contain the sounds that they already know. Most staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme and to provide individual reading support effectively. However, occasionally, some staff do not deliver certain aspects of the phonics programme well enough. This limits how quickly some pupils learn to read.

Pupils settle quickly into class routines. They persevere with activities in classrooms and also during outdoor learning. Students in the sixth form are excellent role models for younger pupils. During lunchtimes, staff sit with some pupils to help them to develop confidence in using cutlery. The school diligently monitors pupils' attendance. It employs a variety of strategies that encourage regular attendance. Pupils' attendance improves over time.

The school places a strong focus on fostering pupils' wider development. Pupils are taught about the importance of relationships, including consent. They regularly go on trips, including to zoos, farms and for walks in local parks. These activities help pupils to develop their mental health and their well-being. External speakers help to make pupils aware of potential risks that they may encounter outside of school, such as county lines. Older pupils, and students in the sixth form, receive helpful careers advice and guidance. This enables them to make informed choices about their future lives.

Governors support and challenge the school well, with a focus on continuing to improve the quality of education that the school provides for pupils. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that the school should continue to develop.

Staff take pride in being part of the school. They are positive role models and work collaboratively as a team. Staff, including those who are new to teaching, spoke highly of

the school's efforts in reducing their workload, for example whenever new initiatives are implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of staff do not implement the phonics programme consistently well. This hinders how quickly some pupils learn to read. The school should ensure that staff receive the necessary training to deliver the phonics curriculum effectively.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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	111511
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10294276
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	147
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amanda Hartley
Headteacher	Sarah Adam (acting headteacher)
Website	www.dorinpark.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and disabilities, including severe to profound and multiple, moderate and physical. Some pupils experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and a small, but increasing, minority of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school currently provides education for pupils aged four to 18 years old.
- Since the last inspection, there have been substantial changes in senior leadership. This includes the appointment of an acting headteacher from January 2024, who is due to take up post as substantive headteacher from September 2024.
- Some pupils in key stages 4 and 5 undertake vocational courses at one registered alternative education provider.
- 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 judgement 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 acting headteacher, other leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 carried out deep dives in communication and early reading, mathematics and physical development. For each deep dive, 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. An inspector observed some pupils read to familiar staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey to consider.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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