

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hawthorns School

Manley Grove, Hyde SK14 6PJ

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 April 2025

Outcome

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

The headteacher of this school is Jonathan Curtis. This school is part of New Bridge multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Clare John, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Williams.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love to come to this welcoming school. They are greeted each morning by enthusiastic staff with open arms and beaming smiles.

Pupils benefit enormously from kind, compassionate and highly skilled staff. They know that staff care deeply for them. There is always an adult there for them when needed. Pupils feel happy and know that they are safe.

Staff are passionate about providing the very best for pupils. From the youngest to the oldest, there is no limit to what the school expects pupils to achieve. Staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' unique and complex needs. This, along with an aspirational curriculum, ensures that pupils, all of who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps in education.

The school skilfully helps pupils to manage their own behaviour and emotions. Staff are experts at identifying when pupils are anxious or unsettled. They respond quickly and sensitively.

Pupils enjoy impressive opportunities which promote their wider development. They benefit from being involved in local and regional sporting events, school performances and outdoor education activities such as gardening, cycling and forest skills. Pupils delight in exploring the sensory garden, climbing trees, den building and sitting with their friends around a campfire.

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

This school is relentless in continually improving experiences for pupils. Pupils are offered an exemplary education.

The school has designed a highly effective and ambitious curriculum. Its curriculum thinking is exceptionally well developed and reflects a strong determination that every pupil will benefit from rich and engaging learning experiences. This prepares pupils extremely well for life in modern Britain.

Staff receive frequent, high-quality professional development. Many become experts in their field and share best practice with others. This includes working with both special and mainstream schools across their own multi-academy trust and within the local authority.

Teachers are confident in the subjects they teach. They are adept at finding interesting ways to 'hook' pupils into their learning and explain new ideas clearly. This helps pupils to remember important learning. Staff have a detailed understanding of each pupil. They skilfully adapt the delivery of the curriculum to accurately meet their needs. As a result, pupils thrive.

At the heart of the school's work is a focus on pupils' communication skills. This aspect of the curriculum is delivered with expertise. It is based on a thorough understanding of how to develop pupils' communication, language and social interaction needs. For example, staff are expert at finding ways to encourage non-verbal pupils to sustain their attention and positively engage with what is going on around them.

Fostering a love of reading is a prominent feature in this school. From the early years, children are immersed in stories, rhymes, and songs. Pupils enjoy learning the foundations of reading, for example through listening and responding to sounds. Pupils who are ready to learn phonics develop their early reading skills extremely well. They decode texts and read books that are closely matched to the sounds that they already know. Many parents and carers expressed to inspectors their astonishment and pride that their child was learning to read.

From the youngest children onwards, staff are adept at teaching important skills such as following routines, being aware of others and taking turns. The relentless focus on building positive learning habits takes time but leads to pupils becoming highly motivated and taking pride in their learning. The school has extremely strong relationships with families. It checks absence thoroughly. The school successfully ensures that pupils attend school regularly.

The school expertly promotes the personal development of all pupils. This prepares them well for success in their day-to-day life beyond school. Pupils grow in confidence, independence, and resilience, through the many experiences they are offered. For example, pupils learn to cook simple meals that they can repeat at home with their families. The school also helps pupils to cope with everyday tasks such as hair brushing and going to the hairdressers.

Those responsible for governance share the school's high ambition and dedication to pupils. Staff value the support they receive for their well-being and workload. They appreciate the time the school gives them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school. They share the school's determination to make a real difference to the lives of pupils and their families.

Parents are effusive about school. They typically say that staff are 'amazing' and 'go above and beyond' in all that they do for them and their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 outstanding 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 outstanding for overall effectiveness in May 2015.

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	140133
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	10348296
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Williams
CEO of the trust	Clare John
Headteacher	Jonathan Curtis
Website	www.hawthornsschool.org
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, Hawthorns School has experienced significant changes. There has been an increase in pupils on the school roll and in September 2024 the school moved to new purpose-built premises.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan. Since the last inspection, the complexity of SEND need has increased. The school caters for pupils a range of complex needs including those with speech, language and communication needs and autism.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2024.

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, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders and staff in the school, including those responsible for safeguarding and pastoral care.
- The lead inspector spoke to the CEO of the multi-academy trust, members of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees and members of the governing body, including the vice chair of governors. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to 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' interests first.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff, which focused on their own workload and well-being.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to school improvement.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- There were no responses to the online survey for pupils. However, as appropriate, inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Atkin

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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