

Inspection of Hope School

Kelvin Grove, Marus Bridge, Wigan, Greater Manchester WN3 6SP

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

The nurturing environment in this school ensures that pupils are well cared for and that they feel valued and safe. Staff make every effort to know pupils extremely well. They build positive, trusting relationships that foster a family atmosphere. The school has high expectations for pupils' academic and personal achievements. This ambition is realised.

Pupils learn from a broad and enriching set of experiences. For example, visits to the beach, water sports and outdoor activities develop pupils' social, physical and sensory development. Sixth form students explore plentiful work-experience options. They also work in the college bistro, serving customers and preparing food. Pupils' big smiles, laughter and enjoyment reflect their happiness at being part of this school. For example, pupils sing with infectious enthusiasm in the school choir with their peers.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school offers a personal approach that is highly effective in supporting each pupil to make progress against their individual targets. Over time, pupils learn to manage their emotions and behaviour. They demonstrate respect and acceptance of each other's differences.

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

The school has taken decisive action to refine its curriculum to better meet the changing needs of pupils. The curriculum is organised into five distinct pathways to ensure the school meets the unique, individual needs of all its pupils. In some curriculum areas, such as communication, language and physical development, these pathways are firmly embedded. Staff know what should be taught, and they deliver the curriculum well. As a result, pupils achieve highly. However, in some other curriculum areas, the school is at an earlier stage of refining and adapting the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. The school is not as sure about whether these changes are having the desired impact on pupils' learning.

Teachers select activities that engage and sustain pupils' attention effectively. They carefully select the key words and phrases that pupils should learn. Teachers use repetition and emphasis to help pupils remember new concepts. Communication aids are used consistently well across all areas of the school. Nonverbal pupils, alongside their peers, use sign and symbols together well. Some pupils use technology to further support their communication independently. This gives pupils the opportunity to make choices and ask questions.

Reading is a high priority. Stories, poems, songs and non-fiction books bring learning to life. Children in the early years sing and sign together seamlessly with their peers. Pupils who are at the early stages of reading have the support that they need to learn the letters that sounds represent. A wide range of books are available that match with the sounds that pupils learn. Pupils are proud of their achievements and enjoy taking their books home to read.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. The school sees every pupil as a unique individual and strives to ensure each pupil has their needs met precisely. The school engages effectively with parents and carers and a range of professionals to identify and meet pupils' speech and language, physical, sensory and health needs. If pupils' behaviour changes, staff work with parents and therapists to find solutions to enable the pupils to settle quickly and learn.

The school prioritises helping pupils to attend school as much as possible. It works closely with the local authority and parents to remove any barriers that may lead to pupils' absence. The school uses attendance information very well to check trends in pupils' attendance over time and to make sure that families receive the support that they need. As a result, pupils usually attend school regularly, or their attendance typically improves over time.

Pupils' personal development is the foundation stone of the school. The school ensures that opportunities for pupils to prepare for adulthood are woven seamlessly through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. For example, from the early years through to the sixth form there are opportunities to learn about the world of work. Visitors from a wide range of workplaces visit the early years, older pupils visit local workplaces and in the sixth form, students reflect with their peers about their work experience placements. Such experiences ensure that pupils are ready for their next stage in education and adulthood.

The school has considered the age and the cognitive development of pupils carefully and has integrated fundamental British values through their learning in meaningful ways. For example, pupils learn about democracy through participation in the school council and youth parliament.

The school and the governing body engage effectively and work collaboratively with parents. Parents appreciate this close partnership. Regular informal parent sessions are held in school, where parents ask for advice and receive timely support from the school and other professionals.

The school is considerate of staff's well-being. It has listened to staff diligently and has reduced the amount of paperwork that staff are required to use. This allows teachers to have the time to fulfil their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The refinement to the curriculum is at an early stage of development for some areas. The school does not have a clear enough overview of the success of this work on pupils' learning. The school should ensure that its work to implement the new

curriculum pathways are embedded so that there is greater consistency in pupils' learning over time.

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	106543
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10377931
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	237
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Slonker
Headteacher	Susan Lucas
Website	www.hope.wigan.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 April 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at this school have complex SEND. They have a range of primary needs including autistic spectrum disorder, multi-sensory impairment, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school's capacity has increased since the previous inspection. The school operates on two sites. The sixth form is housed at Montrose Avenue, Wigan WN5 9XN.
- The school offers provision for two-year-old children.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and early reading, personal, social, health and economic education and physical development. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also discussed other aspects of the curriculum and visited the early years and sixth form.
- 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 reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils and staff about the school. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors also considered the findings of Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff or pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alexia Gargrave	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Atkin	Ofsted Inspector

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