

Inspection of The Heath School

Clifton Road, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4SY

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Mark Tudor. This school is part of The Heath Family 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), David Donnelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Stevenson.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for all pupils' success. Pupils follow a curriculum that reflects the school's vision that pupils should 'know more, do more, and be more'. Pupils enjoy learning. They embrace new knowledge and they are keen to show what they have remembered. Most pupils achieve well.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They are polite and respectful towards each other. Teachers strive to help pupils to grow as individuals. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thrive in a culture where everyone can be themselves. Pupils show a genuine care for their classmates. They spoke about the importance of respecting the differences between people.

Pupils benefit from the positive contribution that student leaders make to the school. This includes delivering assemblies and leading well-being forums. Pupils on the junior leadership team are excellent role models for younger pupils. They are thoughtful and professional when representing pupils' views to staff. Pupils said that the school readily considers their suggestions and ideas. This contributes further to the strong relationships between staff and pupils.

Pupils enjoy many opportunities to learn beyond the academic curriculum. For example, pupils take part in a wide range of activities such as history club, darts and hockey. The school encourages pupils to work towards The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These opportunities help to develop pupils' character and resilience.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a curriculum that is rich, varied and engaging for pupils. The curriculum is aspirational and well designed, including for pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. The school clearly knows what it wants pupils to learn and the order in which this knowledge should be taught. Every pupil can choose from a wide range of subjects in key stage 4. This broadens their choices and sets them up well for future study.

In the main, teachers have strong subject knowledge and, for the most part, they deliver the curriculum well. This is because the school, together with the trust, has invested considerably in staff training. The effective use of consistent routines and whole-school teaching methods, for example, is helping pupils to learn and remember more. Teachers support pupils to ask questions and solve problems. This is helping many pupils to excel.

The school has introduced a rigorous approach to identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' learning. Many teachers spot gaps in pupils' knowledge and address them in the moment. However, some teachers do not use the school's assessment systems as well as they should. These teachers do not routinely check how secure pupils are in their learning. Sometimes, they move on to new topics before pupils are ready. This hinders some pupils from building a deep and rich body of subject knowledge over time.

Reading has been prioritised. Pupils across both key stages enjoy reading a broad range of texts, for example, during form time or when they visit the vibrant library. There are systematic methods in place to identify those pupils in the early stages of learning to read. Many of these pupils receive bespoke, additional support from skilled staff. However, from time to time, teachers do not support those pupils who struggle with their reading sufficiently well in lessons. Some pupils find it harder to access the wider curriculum as a result.

The schools' identification of pupils' additional needs is effective. Teachers use information successfully to make appropriate adaptations in lessons to help these pupils make greater progress. Pupils with SEND, and those who are disadvantaged, are achieving better than they have in the past. This has been borne out in improved published outcomes over time.

The school has created a learning environment that is warm and inviting. Classrooms are calm, orderly places that are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils are attentive to their studies and show very positive attitudes to learning. Staff expectations are high, and most pupils meet these expectations without fail.

The school is passionate about raising pupils' aspirations and addressing social disadvantage. Older pupils are knowledgeable about further education and training. Pupils have access to a wide range of impartial careers advice and guidance. This support helps them to make informed choices about their next steps. The school ensures that pupils move on to positive destinations that help them to realise their future career goals and ambitions.

Personal development is a strength of the school. The provision for personal development focuses on the school values of kindness, integrity and tenacity. Staff help pupils to learn about health, well-being and positive relationships in an age-appropriate way. The school is keen to develop pupils as active citizens, ready for life in modern society.

The trust understands the key priorities for the school. It supports and challenges the school in all aspects of its work, for example, through the use of external reviews and effective quality assurance processes. The school prioritises staff well-being and helps them to manage their workload effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school and they said that the school plays a positive role in the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not use the school's assessment systems consistently well. These teachers are sometimes unclear about what knowledge pupils have retained. This hinders some pupils from learning as deeply as they should over time. The school should ensure that teachers are fully equipped to check that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving on to new learning.
- At times, teachers do not design appropriate activities that help weaker readers to develop confidence in their reading in lessons. This hinders these pupils' ability to access the wider curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers across the curriculum are supported to address gaps in pupils' reading knowledge.

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	136779
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10377997
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1184
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Stevenson
CEO of the trust	David Donnelly
Principal	Mark Tudor
Website	http://www.heathschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Heath Family Trust.
- 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.
- The school uses one registered and two unregistered providers of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.

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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the local governing body and some trustees, including the chair of the trust. An inspector also met with the CEO of the trust and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.
- An inspector met with the leaders for SEND and reviewed samples of documentation relating to pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the minutes of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation and development plan and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.

Inspection team

Kevin Sexton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Platt	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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