

Inspection of Poppy Field School

18 Lugsdale Road, Halton, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 6DJ

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and carers describe Poppy Field School as a school that transforms their lives for the better. The school's work with parents, to make pupils' start at the school successful, is admirable. All pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures that pupils' needs are met exceptionally well.

For many pupils, the school provides a stable, successful environment for the first time in their education. They turn up each day with a thirst for learning and eager to acquire new knowledge. Pupils flourish academically and socially.

The school is determined for every pupil to achieve highly. Pupils learn an impressive curriculum. They know that staff believe in them and place no limits on their learning. From their individual starting points, pupils make remarkable progress through the curriculum.

Pupils respond well to the exceptionally high expectations that the school has for their behaviour. Staff understand pupils' emotional needs well because they get to know pupils as unique individuals. Pupils learn how to behave appropriately in school and in other situations. They enjoy getting recognition for their efforts through the school's rewards system.

The 'Poppy Field 50' experiences add tremendous value to pupils' life experiences. These enable pupils to develop key skills that help them to build their independence. For instance, pupils visit the local supermarket to learn about shopping on a budget.

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

The school has designed a purposeful, well-crafted curriculum with careful precision. Staff quickly review pupils' prior learning when they join the school. This helps staff to have a thorough knowledge of what pupils' next steps should be. Furthermore, staff use this information to identify any potential barriers to pupils' future achievement.

The school has set out the key knowledge that it wants pupils to learn. This knowledge is skilfully sequenced so that pupils' understanding improves over time. Staff are expert at ensuring that their approach in lessons supports pupils' learning. They maintain a balance of supporting pupils to learn new knowledge while embedding previous learning. Pupils' work across the curriculum is exceptional.

Reading has a high priority across the school. The school's ability to turn around pupils' previous negative views of reading is exemplary. Staff receive high-quality training. As a result, they deliver the school's phonics programme expertly. Staff ensure that the books that pupils read match their phonics knowledge closely. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress in catching up on missed phonics learning. This helps pupils to experience triumph in reading, which many previously found difficult.

The school invests heavily in developing staff's understanding of the curriculum. This has an exceptionally positive impact on staff's delivery of the curriculum. Staff reported that this support has also helped to reduce their workload.

The school's exceptional personal development programme is interwoven into all aspects of school life. Pupils benefit enormously from a carefully designed programme that helps them to develop the social and emotional skills that they need to succeed. Pupils have a well-rounded understanding of the differences between people. They acquire the skills that they need to live and work independently as adults. For example, pupils learn how to use a washing machine and read a bus timetable.

Pupils benefit from comprehensive careers education, information and guidance. Staff work with pupils very well to explore possible career pathways. This work includes aspirational college and training opportunities for pupils. Pupils have the information that they need to make well-considered decisions about their next steps.

Pupils are attentive in lessons. They are motivated to learn and support each other well. Pupils understand the school's exceptionally well-established routines. Staff model how to maintain and develop positive relationships effectively. Pupils are polite and respectful to staff, their peers and visitors. Parents consider the school's impact on their child's behaviour to be far reaching.

The school is unrelenting in its approach to improving pupils' rates of attendance. The school's supportive actions have led to great success in improving many pupils' rates of attendance. This ensures that these pupils benefit from the wealth of opportunities provided by the school.

The proprietor has a very secure knowledge about the school. Alongside the 'critical friend' committee, it provides substantial challenge to the school around aspects such as pupils' performance. This strong oversight of the school ensures that the independent school standards ('the standards') are consistently met. The proprietor ensures the suitability of staff who work in the school. The premises are well maintained with due regard for pupils' and staff's health and safety. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 149567 |
| DfE registration number | 876/6017 |
| Local authority | Halton |
| Inspection number | 10322521 |
| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 19 |
| Proprietor | Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd |
| Chair | Sarah Deaville |
| Headteacher | Nicola Hadfield |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £53,526 to £87,299 |
| Telephone number | 0151 322 3000 |
| Website | www.poppyfieldschool.co.uk |
| Email address | office@poppyfieldschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- This is the school's first standard inspection. It was registered by the Department for Education on 22 May 2023.
- The school is located at 18 Lugsdale Road, Widnes, Halton, Cheshire WA8 6DH.
- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in the early years or sixth form.
- The school is registered to admit up to 40 pupils.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's 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 met with the headteacher, directors of education, the 'critical friends' and a member of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a few pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and as pupils moved around the school building.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school. They spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of the school, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and honest culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors examined school policies and other documents to check the school's compliance with the standards and other requirements. These included: minutes from the 'critical friends' committee; the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school development plan. Inspectors also scrutinised behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- As part of their checks on the school's compliance with the standards, inspectors made a tour of the school premises, accompanied by the directors of education.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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