

Inspection of The Parks School

Market Street, Hindley WN2 3AN

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They know that staff have their best interests at heart. Pupils who come to this school have experienced significant barriers to learning in the past. The school offers them a fresh start. Most pupils soon settle in, make friends and enjoy their time here.

Staff expect pupils to work hard and to succeed. Many pupils have missed long periods of education. Staff provide these pupils with the support that they need to catch up. This helps pupils to grow in confidence and to make strong gains in their learning. Pupils achieve well from their various starting points.

There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff make sure that pupils know the school rules from the start. Pupils try to follow these rules each day, for example by arriving on time for lessons. Pupils show respect to staff and to each other. They develop positive attitudes to learning and their attendance improves considerably over time.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of activities that leaders provide to promote pupils' personal development. For example, pupils learn more about their community when they visit museums and places of interest. They contribute to the lives of other people through opportunities for voluntary work. Pupils learn about British values such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. All these experiences help to prepare pupils for life in British society.

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

Leaders understand the wide range of needs of the pupils who attend the school. They have taken these needs into account when designing their curriculum. This broad, ambitious curriculum successfully engages pupils' interest in learning. By the time that they leave the school, pupils typically achieve well and gain appropriate qualifications, including GCSEs. In 2022, all the pupils leaving Year 11 transferred directly to employment, education or training.

Leaders have carefully considered the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn by the time that they leave the school. In most subjects, leaders have broken down this knowledge into smaller, well-ordered steps. This helps staff to make sure that that no essential knowledge is missing. In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the smaller elements of knowledge that pupils need to learn. This makes it more difficult for staff to ensure that pupils learn everything that they need to know in these subjects.

Since the last inspection, leaders have made some improvements to the way that staff implement the curriculum. For example, in most subjects, staff provide interesting activities that make learning memorable for pupils. On a small number of occasions, in a few subjects, these activities are less memorable. Pupils sometimes forget earlier learning when this happens.

Leaders have put reading at the heart of the curriculum. Many pupils join the school with weaknesses in their reading knowledge. Once in school, pupils practise reading every day. Pupils at an earlier stage of reading receive prompt support to help them to catch up quickly. Through the English curriculum, pupils improve their comprehension, spelling and grammar. This helps them to read and understand texts and to write using key vocabulary in a range of subjects. Leaders ensure that pupils read a wide range of quality texts, such as classic literature and contemporary novels. Over time, pupils grow to enjoy reading and they achieve well from their various starting points.

In lessons, staff check pupils' understanding regularly. This helps staff to identify and correct any misconceptions that pupils might have. Leaders work with staff to analyse the information that they gather through assessments. This enables them to make any necessary adjustments to the curriculum to support pupils to learn better.

Each pupil at the school has an education, health and care plan for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders ensure that these plans inform the decisions that staff make to help pupils to learn the curriculum well. Leaders communicate effectively with a range of professionals, such as mental health workers and early help services. This enables them to secure expert support for pupils should they need it.

Staff develop strong, trusting relationships with pupils. These relationships contribute to a positive culture in lessons that supports all pupils to learn. Low-level disruption is rare because pupils are too busy working. Most pupils commit to regular attendance and take responsibility for arriving punctually each day. These mature attitudes prepare pupils for future education and employment.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education supports pupils to prepare for adult life. For example, pupils learn how to manage their own finances and to look after their own health. Pupils receive appropriate relationships and sex education that follows statutory guidance. Leaders provide activities that enable pupils to develop their talents and interests. For example, pupils participate in activities such as golf, swimming and trampolining.

Leaders provide older pupils with a clearly organised programme of careers education. Pupils visit colleges and work settings. Some pupils attend courses to prepare for apprenticeships. Pupils hear from visiting speakers representing a range of industries and professions. These experiences help pupils to understand the range of opportunities and choices available to them.

The proprietor body ensures that the independent school standards are met consistently and securely. For example, pupils learn in classrooms that are clean and well maintained. The proprietor body also ensures that a wide range of checks and risk assessments are carried out that meet health and safety requirements. The proprietor body makes sure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The proprietor body ensures that they receive a range of information from leaders to help them to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables the proprietor body to hold leaders sufficiently to account for their work to improve the school.

Leaders, including the proprietor body, are considerate of any impact on staff's workload when they make decisions about the school. Staff appreciate leaders' concern for their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The proprietor has ensured that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This training helps staff to recognise when pupils might be at risk of harm. Staff understand and follow the school's clear procedures for reporting any concerns that they might have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders communicate effectively with a range of agencies, such as local authority children's services, early help teams, alternative providers and the police. This enables leaders to secure additional support for pupils and their families when necessary.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when they work online. The proprietor has ensured that there are suitable filtering systems in place to help protect pupils from harmful content. Pupils know who to speak to if they see something that does not look right.

Leaders have provided a suitable safeguarding policy. Copies of this policy are available to parents and carers on request.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the smaller components of knowledge that pupils should learn. This makes it difficult for staff to make sure that pupils learn everything that they need to know. Leaders should ensure that in each subject, the smaller components of learning are clearly identified so that pupils build up sufficient knowledge over time.
- On a few occasions, in a small number of subjects, staff do not select activities that help pupils to learn well. When this happens, pupils find it harder to remember what they have learned in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that staff select activities for pupils that support them to understand and remember important knowledge 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.

School details

Unique reference number	137821
DfE registration number	359/6000
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10267658
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Proprietor	Inspire Training and Education Services Ltd
Chair	Paul Keogh
Headteacher	Garfield Binns
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,936 to £35,499
Telephone number	01942 909033
Website	none
Email address	enquiries@inspiretes.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 to 24 January 2019

Information about this school

- The school is located in the former community library at Market Street, Hindley WN2 3AN.
- Leaders make use of two unregistered alternative providers.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietor body and spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. They also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils about school life.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss leaders' support for their workload and well-being. Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Maria McGarry

Ofsted Inspector

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