

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Cavendish High Academy

Lincoln Close, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4YX

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

The Cavendish High Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, take pleasure in coming to this safe and friendly school. It is a place where they can thrive in a warm and caring environment. Staff know pupils well and they support them with exemplary skills and expertise. This is a happy place for pupils to learn.

Staff manage pupils' transitions between school and home exceptionally well. They create a warm atmosphere to the start of the day and greet pupils with dignity and care. This ensures that pupils feel at ease and quickly settle into their classrooms. For example, pupils have breakfast in their classrooms and staff make sure, where appropriate, that pupils are supported to take responsibility for making this meal themselves. This helps to build pupils' independent living skills.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. In the main, pupils rise to these expectations and behave well. Staff support pupils appropriately to manage their emotions and behaviour. Staff are well trained to manage any variations in pupils' behaviour that do arise from time to time. If bullying happens or pupils are unkind to one another, adults intervene and deal with it swiftly and suitably.

Staff are ambitious for pupils, and leaders are determined that every pupil should benefit from a rich, broad learning experience. Staff focus on ensuring that pupils achieve well and learn how to prepare for adulthood. Staff regularly ensure that pupils can take part in experiences to develop their independence. For example, sixth-form students are encouraged to plan a budget and visit supermarkets to gather shopping.

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

Leaders expect all pupils to do their best. To this end, the curriculum is ambitious and has been designed well by leaders. It covers an appropriate range of academic subjects as well as affording strong support for pupils' personal development. Furthermore, leaders have appropriate systems in place to identify any additional needs that pupils may have.

Staff are equipped fittingly to select suitable learning opportunities that help pupils to gain and use new knowledge. Added to this, staff ensure that pupils frequently revisit earlier learning to embed knowledge into their long-term memory. For example, older pupils used their mathematical knowledge when calculating their fundraising success following a recent school festival.

Staff use assessment strategies appropriately to check on what pupils remember. This enables staff to plan appropriate next steps in learning for pupils. Leaders ensure that timely communication makes sure that parents and carers are well informed about how their children are getting on.

Leaders ensure that pupils can learn well. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive. This helps staff get to know pupils quickly. Staff understand pupils' individual needs. They use their expertise to tailor how they deliver the curriculum for pupils. For the most part, pupils' learning is free from disruption.

Leaders have adopted an effective phonics programme for those pupils who are learning to read and spell. Staff have the subject knowledge and expertise to deliver this programme with precision. For instance, staff ensure that the books that pupils read are matched closely to the sounds that they have learned. Those pupils who attend the 'starbooks' reading club enjoy listening to staff read and discussing literary characters. This further develops pupils' confidence and love of reading.

Pupils' wider development is pivotal to leaders' work. Leaders design and order curriculums with considerable care to support pupils' personal, social and health education. Leaders are keen to equip pupils with the essential qualities of confidence, self-belief and resilience. This supports pupils to navigate their educational journey successfully while prioritising their safety, physical well-being and overall welfare.

Leaders' aim is to ensure that their pupils can make informed decisions and take ownership of their lives as they enter adulthood. Pupils learn about forming relationships and looking after their own health. In the sixth form, students deepen their understanding of self-care. They also learn how to practise some of the domestic work that they will need to do at home.

Leaders are innovative in ensuring that pupils have meaningful experiences and exposure to the world of work. They recognise the barriers that pupils may face, and they work hard to break these down, forming close links with external employers. This helps to ensure that pupils get the very best opportunities. For example, pupils enjoy working with employers to explore possible careers in healthcare.

Staff work collaboratively. There is a strong sense of teamwork and they are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. They feel highly valued and they are encouraged by leaders to study relevant professional qualifications. This helps to sharpen staff's knowledge and expertise.

Those responsible for governance work strategically and carry out their statutory duties effectively. Leaders, including governors, provide pupils with a high-quality education. They show a determination to ensure that they build further on the school's current strengths and ensure that pupils have no ceilings placed on their possible achievements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are meticulous in their approach to safeguarding. They understand the important links between pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. Leaders use this information appropriately to support their work to keep pupils safe from harm.

Staff make sure that pupils' well-being and safety are their top priority. All staff and governors have regular safeguarding training. They know how to report concerns about pupils, and leaders follow up any concerns quickly. For example, staff are vigilant and quick to notice if there are any changes in a pupil's behaviour, appearance or body language that may indicate a cause for concern.

Leaders work effectively with other agencies and they are not afraid to challenge other professionals if necessary. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 predecessor school, Cavendish High School, to be outstanding in February 2011.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140578
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10226113
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	28
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carole Howard
Headteacher	Elaine Haver
Website	www.chs.academy
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the board of trustees, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking to leaders, teachers and, where possible, pupils.
- The lead inspector heard pupils read to their peers and members of staff.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding. They also spoke with other leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View, including the responses via the free-text facility. The views of staff and pupils were also considered by inspectors through Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Ruddy

Ofsted Inspector

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