

Inspection of a good school: Heltwate School

Heltwate, North Bretton, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE3 8RL

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Heltwate School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well supported at Heltwate school. Before joining, some pupils faced difficulties in other schools. They feel settled and safe here. There are clear routines in place throughout the day that help pupils to feel secure. The positive relationships between the staff and pupils help to create the happy environment that exists throughout the school.

When they join Heltwate, pupils are placed on appropriate learning pathways based on their different stages of development. Within their pathway, they are supported to do well.

Some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour. In the main, adults are skilled at helping pupils to re-engage with their learning. Adults have high expectations for what pupils should achieve. They help them to meet their potential both emotionally and academically. Many pupils gain qualifications that prepare them well for life after school.

Adults carefully consider what pupils need and enjoy. Through a wide range of carefully planned activities, pupils build their resilience and independence. They take trips to the supermarket, either on foot or by bus. They enjoy walks around the park, and many also take part in residential trips. This builds their confidence and brings them lots of pleasure.

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

There has been a change in the profile of the pupils in recent years. The school now specialises in supporting pupils with severe learning difficulties. The school's curriculum has well-planned curriculum pathways that are appropriate to meet the varying needs of the pupils. Leaders carefully consider the needs and development stage of their pupils before they put in place a particular pathway. Teachers are skilled in planning activities that help pupils gain necessary life skills, such as self-care or communication. They carefully check how well pupils are progressing and adapt their teaching if a pupil needs additional support.

All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school ensures that each pupil has an individual learning plan with targets that are precisely matched to the needs outlined in their EHC plan. Adults are well trained to use appropriate strategies to help pupils to meet their targets. They focus on shared experiences and activities that create awe and wonder to engage pupils' attention.

The curriculum supports pupils to develop their communication skills, for example repetition, rhymes and songs are used frequently. Pupils gain an understanding of number through different activities, such as songs and counting objects together. Some pupils access aspects of the national curriculum. They enjoy learning to read and playing sports, such as cricket. Sometimes, teachers focus more on helping pupils to meet their EHC plan targets rather than learning the breadth of the national curriculum. This means a small minority of pupils do not consistently benefit from work that is as challenging as it should be.

The school helps pupils to develop a love of stories and reading. Where appropriate to their stage of development, pupils are taught phonics. Teachers are confident in delivering the early reading curriculum. As a result, many pupils show good levels of resilience as they develop the skills they need to become more fluent readers.

From Reception, adults ensure that pupils are happy and focused. The school has introduced a shared programme which prioritises providing effective support for pupils with autism. This is used well by staff to help pupils to manage their behaviour for learning. Sometimes, pupils struggle to focus and take part in the activities. While adults are confident in supporting most pupils to engage, sometimes this is not the case. A minority of pupils display particularly challenging behaviour. Staff would appreciate more support from the school in managing the behaviour of these individuals.

The school's personal development programme is enriching for all pupils. Pupils are taught to develop their independence and ways to take care of themselves. They learn to wash their hands and to socialise with their peers. Adults teach pupils appropriate ways to communicate. For some, this includes using pictures. Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They know how to share any worries that they may have. They love learning to swim or going kayaking. The school makes sure that pupils have experiences of different careers. This includes woodwork and animal care. Adults work to prepare pupils for the next stage of their life effectively.

Governors and leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils who are on the school's more academic pathway do not also have targets that are matched to the national curriculum. Adults prioritise supporting these pupils to meet their EHC plan outcomes. However, there are occasions when the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum is not always reflected in what pupils learn on a day-to-day basis. The school needs to ensure that pupils who can access aspects of the national curriculum are consistently supported to do this so they achieve as well as they are able to.
- A minority of pupils in the school display particularly challenging behaviours. When these pupils become dysregulated, some staff do not feel confident in managing their behaviour. The school needs to ensure that it provides appropriate support to all staff so they feel confident in managing the behaviour of all pupils at the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 school to be good in November 2014.

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	110948
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10323613
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Marshall
Headteacher	Adam Brewster
Website	www.heltwate.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school specialises in supporting pupils with the following needs: speech, language and communication, specific learning difficulty and autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education 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.

- 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.
- An adult was present when inspectors spoke with pupils to support pupils to feel secure and to help with their self-regulation.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, numeracy and physical development. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to some pupils.
- The lead inspector met with governors and reviewed documentation relating to governance and school improvement.
- Inspectors reviewed attendance records and observed pupils' behaviour around the site.
- An inspector met with leaders to discuss the school's approach to pupils' personal development and careers.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to pupils' individual learning plans.
- The inspectors considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They also reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Al Mistrano

His Majesty's Inspector

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