

Inspection of Halton School

31 Main Street, Halton, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2AN

Inspection dates: 30 November to 2 December 2022

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?

The pupils who come to Halton School have emotional and behavioural needs. They typically show improvement in their behaviour after some time in the school. This is because staff have high expectations and are calmly persistent in getting pupils to behave well. Staff have effective ways of managing any behavioural issues in lessons to get pupils quickly back on track. Leaders and teachers deal with bullying effectively and keep the number of incidents low.

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils and staff get on well with each other. Pupils feel safe, and they said that their teachers care for them well.

Pupils know that leaders and teachers want them to do their best in their work. Pupils usually improve their attitudes to learning at the school, which helps them to focus and to acquire the knowledge they need in the future. Teachers enable pupils to achieve as well as they can.

Pupils have opportunities to enjoy experiences that are outside of academic subjects. For example, they take part in climbing activities to encourage self-confidence. They also think about less fortunate people by raising money for charity.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum which meets the needs and interests of pupils well. There is a broad range of subjects, which matches the requirements of the independent school standards. In most subjects, leaders have defined the knowledge that they expect pupils to acquire and the order in which it will be taught. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not given enough thought to what pupils will learn and when they will learn it. Consequently, in these few subjects, pupils do not build up their knowledge as strongly as they should.

Teachers typically have secure knowledge of the subjects that they teach. Those teachers who are not specialists in a subject receive effective support. Colleagues in school or the wider school collaboration share their expertise with each other. Leaders also provide formal training for staff as appropriate. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to provide pupils with clear explanations that support learning.

Teachers have helpful methods to assess what pupils know and remember. They frequently check that pupils have remembered recent learning. They also carry out written tests to assess whether pupils have understood longer units of learning. Most pupils remember what they have been taught and they use this prior learning well to help them to understand new topics and concepts.

When pupils join the school, they have often missed substantial amounts of learning because of their needs. Leaders successfully help pupils to engage with learning again. Most pupils achieve as well as they can across most of the curriculum. Many pupils leave with useful qualifications which help them with their next steps in employment, training or education.

Leaders encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. They successfully help pupils to improve their reading knowledge. Leaders assess how well pupils can read when they first start at the school. They evaluate pupils' strengths and weaknesses, including in phonics. Teachers have received suitable training in phonics and provide pupils with effective individual support if they need it. Teachers check on pupils regularly as they progress through the school. Over time, most pupils become more fluent and accurate readers.

The key to enabling pupils to re-engage with learning at the school is the work that leaders and staff do to improve pupils' behaviour. Leaders guide staff well and help them to develop positive relationships with pupils. As a result, staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Staff respond to misbehaviour promptly and ensure that the school is an orderly place for the large majority of the time.

Leaders have effective processes for identifying the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff benefit from formal training that helps them develop their knowledge of SEND. They use this knowledge together with shared expertise to ensure the timely identification of pupils' needs. Leaders have a range of appropriate internal and external sources of support to help pupils to access the curriculum.

Pupils' wider personal development is well supported by a range of activities within the curriculum and beyond. Effectively planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education supports pupils' health and well-being. Outdoor and adventurous activities help pupils to develop resilience and confidence. Pupils receive opportunities to support the local community, for instance by cooking and providing food for a homeless shelter. There is well-organised careers advice for pupils of secondary age. This helps them to make informed choices about their future based on their interests and strengths.

Leaders are considerate of teachers' workload and well-being. Staff said that leaders are supportive and approachable. Leaders also establish positive relationships with parents and carers.

The chair and members of the proprietor body have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They fully understand their roles and responsibilities. They hold school leaders to account effectively. They have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. Leaders also have a suitable action plan in place to support pupils with disabilities who may attend the school, which meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

There is a suitable policy about relationships and sex education. The scheme of work helps pupils to understand important ideas, such as consent and healthy relationships. The policy and the scheme of work are in keeping with the government's guidance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and know the possible signs of abuse or neglect and report any concerns in a timely way. Leaders have thorough processes for recording concerns about pupils' safeguarding issues. Leaders act quickly to give pupils the help that they need, enlisting the support of outside agencies, such as social care, if necessary.

Teachers provide pupils with the knowledge that they need to stay safe. For instance, pupils know about the dangers of alcohol and illegal drugs.

There is a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place, which has regard to the most recent guidance from the government. Leaders have made this available on the school's website.

Leaders know the procedures for responding appropriately if any allegations are made against a member of staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not defined the knowledge that they expect pupils to acquire and the order in which it will be taught. This means that some pupils do not gain the knowledge that they need for future learning as securely as they could. Leaders should make sure that the knowledge which pupils need and the order in which it will be taught are well thought out in these subjects. This is so that pupils build their learning as strongly as possible.

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	133485
DfE registration number	876/6000
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10210342
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Proprietor	Keys Group Limited
Chair	Nicola Kelly
Headteacher	Hayley Cunningham
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,000 to £47,000
Telephone number	01928 589810
Website	www.keys-group.co.uk/services/education/halton
Email address	hayley.cunningham@keys-group.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 March 2018

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last standard inspection.
- The school's previous standard inspection was on 6 to 8 March 2018. An emergency inspection was carried out on 1 July 2021.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is situated on two sites. These are approximately two miles apart. The first site is located at 31 Main Street, Halton, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2AN. The second site is located at Halton Station Road, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 3EW.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- There are currently no pupils at the school who are in key stage 2 or who are aged over 16.
- There is a minor discrepancy between the name of the proprietor body as it appears on the Companies House website (Keys Group Limited) and the government's 'Get Information about Schools' website (Keys Group).

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 that 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 spoke with representatives of the proprietor body, the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, including reading, physical education and PSHE education. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading to members of staff. He also examined the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy, along with other policies and documentation related to pupils' welfare and their education. They talked

with staff and pupils about safeguarding, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.

- The lead inspector inspected the premises to check for compliance against the relevant independent school standards.
- The lead inspector analysed responses to Ofsted's staff survey and Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022