

Inspection of an outstanding school: Knowsley Central School

Mossbrow Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 7SY

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

Knowsley Central School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from an exceptional standard of education at this school. They run into school with happy, smiling faces. Parents and carers talk about the school as being 'life-changing'. Some parents say that life at home has improved because, since joining the school, their children are confident and happy.

Pupils enjoy their learning because staff celebrate every success. There is a culture of high ambition and pride in the school. This school lives up to its motto: 'Everyone is a star and can shine in our learning community.'

Staff plan the curriculum with care. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well supported. Pupils settle well and they told us that they feel safe. Staff ensure that pupils learn how to manage their own behaviour and emotions.

There is a quiet and calm atmosphere. Pupils enjoy spending time with their friends. If there are any disagreements between pupils, staff step in quickly and help pupils to make friends and move on. Bullying is very rare. If any problems do occur, staff speak with parents and work to resolve things as quickly as possible.

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

Pupils benefit from an exciting and ambitious curriculum that covers a broad range of subjects. The well-designed curriculum makes clear important links between different subjects. This allows pupils to make connections in their learning. For example, pupils write letters, newspaper articles, poems and stories in English based on events that happened during the Second World War that they have learned about in history. Topics in history and English are planned carefully so that pupils can revisit learning. Leaders also ensure that carefully selected experiences, including trips and visits, support pupils' learning in history well. Staff use a range of highly appropriate resources to help pupils learn. These include sensory rooms and visual instructions.

The curriculum promotes pupils' life skills strongly. This prepares them well for their future. Staff have carefully planned this curriculum to allow pupils to gain important knowledge in a logical order from early years to key stage 3. For example, in mathematics, pupils can build well on their knowledge and understanding of the value of money. Once pupils are confident to use money, they can practise this learning through real-life activities, such as buying items from local shops and cafés.

The school's wider curriculum is also planned and delivered well. There is a rich choice of activities for pupils to take part in. These activities allow pupils to develop socially and morally. Some pupils may not have had the opportunity to benefit from these types of activity before. For example, residential trips allow pupils to undertake adventure activities with their friends. During these activities, pupils can develop their independence and resilience and they can learn how to work as part of a team. The student council have recently planned a cake sale. Pupils used the money raised to buy items from the local supermarket and donated these items to the local community food bank.

Highly-skilled staff support pupils to learn how to read. Some pupils arrive at school with very little reading knowledge. Through effective phonics teaching, pupils achieve well in reading. Staff check carefully on pupils' reading. They know exactly what each child and pupil need to know and be able to do to become a fluent and confident reader. This ensures that pupils can catch up with their reading. There is a very strong culture of reading across the school. Younger children enjoy listening to adults read. Pupils join in enthusiastically with songs, rhymes and actions. Older pupils are competitive readers. As well as reading together in class they enjoy reading their own books at home.

Pupils' behaviour in and around school is excellent. Pupils want to learn, and they enjoy their lessons. There is no low-level disruption.

Leaders reflect regularly on all aspects of the school. They are keen to ensure that every pupil has a highly positive, rewarding and enjoyable education. They ensure that staff understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and how best to support them. This is a school where leaders, governors and staff work together well to provide the best possible quality of education for pupils.

The vast majority of staff agreed that leaders are considerate about their workload and well-being. Parents could not praise the school highly enough, with many parents saying that staff go 'above and beyond' to support the needs of their children well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Parents told us they are confident that their children are safe. Staff have created a caring and nurturing environment.

Safeguarding systems and procedures within the school are robust. Knowledgeable staff are vigilant and quick to respond appropriately to any signs that may indicate a cause for

concern. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other agencies to keep children safe.

A detailed training programme ensures that all staff, including those who are new to the school, have up-to-date safeguarding knowledge.

Background

When we have judged a special 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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding on 14–15 October 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	104500
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10045806
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Little
Headteacher	Daryl McConnell
Website	www.knowsleycentral.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 October 2014

Information about this school

- In agreement with the local authority, the school will no longer be offering places for key stage 3 pupils from September 2020.
- All pupils who attend this school have an education, health and care plan.
- The types of SEND provision that the school caters for include: specific learning difficulty; moderate learning difficulty; autism spectrum disorder; speech, language and communication; hearing/visual impairment; social, emotional and mental health; and complex learning difficulties.

Information about this inspection

- We held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, other members of staff and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. These discussions considered the quality of education, the wider experiences of pupils at the school, aspects of pupils' behaviour and leadership and management. We met with several parents.
- In considering the quality of education, we concentrated on reading, English, mathematics and physical education. We discussed the arrangements for the curriculum and teaching with the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. We visited

lessons and then spoke with pupils about what they had been learning. We looked at pupils' work in these subjects.

- We spoke to staff, governors and pupils about how the school keeps pupils safe. We examined the single central record of the checks undertaken to make sure that staff are suitable to work in school. We reviewed the school's safeguarding policy.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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