

Inspection of a good school: Manchester Secondary PRU

Mersey Valley Campus, Barlow Hall Road, Chorlton, Greater Manchester M21 7JJ

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 September 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school gives pupils a fresh start in education. Pupils have staff who will listen to them and understand their needs. They are able to put the past behind them and look forward to a positive future. Pupils are able to access a number of curriculum pathways to support their individual needs.

Pupils do not always appreciate the clear boundaries that are set for them but they do understand that the rules are helping to keep them safe in school. Staff have the patience to build trusting relationships with pupils. In time, pupils respond to this approach and begin to enjoy education again. The parents and carers who spoke to inspectors commented on the helpful support that they received from leaders and staff, and the positive impact that this has made on their children's lives.

Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is because, until recently, the school's curriculum did not enable pupils to know and remember more.

Pupils' behaviour can often be challenging, but over time, they are taught effective strategies that help them to manage their emotions better. Staff are highly vigilant. They respond to any concerns that pupils raise, including bullying, quickly and effectively.

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

The school has undergone significant changes in the last 18 months. New leaders have taken decisive action to reduce the use of alternative provision in order to improve the quality of education for pupils. Leaders want all pupils to benefit from an ambitious curriculum. They have started to realise this aim but this work is still in the early stages of development.

Some subject curriculums have already been redesigned. Careful thought has been given to what is taught and when pupils will learn this content. However, the curriculums in other subjects have not received the same attention. It is unclear what important knowledge pupils should learn and when this will happen. This prevents pupils from knowing and remembering more over time.

Teachers across the different centres are at various stages of implementing the curriculum effectively. Some teachers are less skilled in checking on pupils' learning to make sure that their understanding is secure before they introduce new ideas. Leaders and teachers have not given enough thought to pupils' various starting points when they enter the school. This limits teachers' ability to identify gaps in learning and reshape the curriculum to help pupils gain missing knowledge. In contrast, leaders are better equipped at identifying the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They ensure that these pupils receive the support that they need to access the curriculum

Reading is a priority. Teachers select books carefully to engage and inspire pupils. These books promote debate and discussion and allow pupils to know more about other cultures. Pupils who find reading more difficult receive effective support to help them gain the knowledge and skills to become confident readers.

School leaders work in partnership with a range of professionals from other agencies to support pupils' personal and emotional needs. This is helping pupils to keep safe in school and in the wider community. It is also helping pupils to successfully move on to the next stage of their education, whether this is in another school or in post-16 provision. However, other aspects of pupils' personal development are not as carefully considered. This is because the personal, social and health curriculum does not enable pupils to learn all they should in a suitably ordered manner. This limits pupils' readiness for life in modern Britain.

Leaders have improved the systems for managing pupils' behaviour. This is allowing them to analyse incidents of poor behaviour and take effective action to support pupils to manage their emotions. Pupils do exhibit challenging behaviour, but well-trained staff are quick to intervene and de-escalate the situation. This means that, typically, most pupils can learn without disruption.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's current position. They are mindful that the recent turbulence in leadership has had a negative impact on staff's workload and well-being. Leaders are working to rectify this situation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. An extensive programme of training keeps staff, and managers of each centre, up to date with all local and national safeguarding guidance. This means that they are well informed and quickly spot and report any emerging concerns.

Leaders work closely with external professionals and agencies to support any pupils and families who may need help. The multi-agency team responds immediately when needed. Pupils are helped to understand risk so that they can keep themselves safe in school and outside in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects is still in development. Leaders have not identified the essential knowledge that pupils should learn or clarified when this should be taught. As a result, pupils do not develop their understanding well enough. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking so that teachers across all of the centres know what should be taught and when this should happen.
- Some teachers, across the different centres, are not equipped to check that pupils have learned the curriculum. This means that they move pupils on to new learning too quickly before prior learning is secure. In addition, the systems for checking on what pupils already know when they start at the school are not effective. Consequently, teachers do not reshape the curriculum well enough to help pupils to overcome gaps in their learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers recognise and then tackle gaps in pupils' knowledge so that they can know and remember more over time.
- The personal, social and health curriculum is not as effective as it should be in helping pupils to know all that they need for their future lives in modern Britain. Across all of the centres, leaders should ensure that teachers know what content to teach and when this should be taught.

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 January 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](#)' 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	136743
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10226075
Type of school	Secondary pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	
Headteacher	Andrew Burton
Website	www.mspru.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new executive headteacher was appointed in February 2021. There have been significant changes within the staff and leadership team over the last 18 months.
- The school has reduced its use of alternative providers. It now uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school has five centres across Manchester. They cater for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4. Pupils are referred by the local authority or mainstream schools for short- or longer-term placements.

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 executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders in the school. Inspectors spoke with members of the

management committee, including the chair. Inspectors spoke with a representative from the local authority and a consultant providing external support.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics, art and design, science, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and visited some lessons in other subjects. Inspectors visited some lessons and spoke with leaders and staff at the three registered providers.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that in relation to safeguarding and spoke with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a few parents. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Holmes	Ofsted Inspector
Iain Sim	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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