

Inspection of an outstanding school: Cloughwood Academy

Stones Manor Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1NU

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2021

Outcome

Cloughwood Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive socially, emotionally and academically at Cloughwood Academy. They access a rich and exciting set of experiences which go beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils thoroughly enjoy outdoor activities such as water sports, cycling and camping. Pupils' eyes are opened to new ideas and their imaginations are sparked by possibilities through a wide range of cultural experiences. All pupils enjoy daily after-school clubs and enrichment events. This encourages pupils to immerse themselves in the arts, sports, games and languages.

Pupils are happy and safe in school. Staff and pupils enjoy each other's company and always have lunch together. The trusting and supportive relationships between pupils and staff are evident across the school.

Pupils behave very well. Occasionally, they do fall out. When this happens, staff are quick to notice any problems and intervene. Staff deal with any bullying if it should happen. Pupils understand each other's differences and work together well.

Pupils live up to staff's high expectations and achieve highly at this school. They gain a wide range of nationally recognised qualifications. The dedicated focus on personal development and wider experiences ensures that every pupil leaves the school ready and confident to take their next steps into further education, training or work.

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

Leaders and governors have designed a highly ambitious and creative curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure pupils will have the academic knowledge and the personal skills that they need for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Teachers know the pupils exceptionally well. They use each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan to ensure that learning is precisely tailored to pupils' needs. Teachers use

assessment very effectively to identify any gaps in pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are deepening their knowledge. They are knowing more and remembering more.

Pupils study a wide range of national curriculum subjects. In key stage 2, pupils often start at Cloughwood Academy following a turbulent and disruptive previous education. Pupils soon settle into school life, and staff ensure any gaps in pupils' knowledge are addressed. As a result, pupils catch up quickly.

As pupils move up through the school from key stage 3 to key stage 4, the academic subjects that they study broaden. Pupils also experience further opportunities in vocational and work-based learning. They talked enthusiastically about their work experience placements in catering and hospitality, sport, land-based studies and motor mechanics. Pupils said that the placements have helped them to acquire skills such as communication, time management and working with adults. Staff work very closely with pupils to identify their talents and interests. As a result, pupils are well supported into work-based learning and future careers which meet their needs.

There is a very strong culture of reading in school. Many pupils who start at the school in key stage 2 struggle to read. These pupils access a phonics programme to help them catch up quickly. Pupils read to an adult every day. They choose from a wide range of books to support early reading which are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils in the secondary school enjoy reading in class and often take books home so that they can read for pleasure.

Pupils are very polite and well mannered. The school systems and procedures for managing behaviour are consistent and well established. This helps pupils to manage their behaviour and follow the 'Cloughwood Way'. There is very little low-level disruption in class. This is because staff are quick to spot when a pupil might be struggling and need additional support.

The curriculum focuses as much on pupils' wider development as it does on their academic development. Pupils have access to a vast menu of enrichment and cultural experiences that are embedded within the curriculum. For example, pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which supports their independence, resilience and team-building skills. They enjoy attending a chess club, which allows them to experience the challenge of a board game. Pupils also benefit from trips to gyms, museums, theatres, places of worship and the seaside. These rich and varied experiences not only deepen pupils' learning but allow them to enjoy activities that they may not have engaged in before.

Staff said that their workload is manageable and they appreciate the support that they receive from their leaders. Staff are overwhelmingly happy to work in the school.

Governors and trust members have a strong and passionate vision for the school. They know the school well and are committed to continuously improving its effectiveness to meet the needs of the pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Training is thorough and staff know how to identify pupils who may need help. The designated safeguarding leader, (DSL) secures help quickly for those who need it and works effectively with safeguarding partners and other agencies.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in school and the wider community, as well as online. Pupils talked knowledgeably about how to foster and maintain positive and respectful relationships with others.

Background

When we have judged a school 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in May 2016.

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.

If you are the school and you are 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	140093
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10199731
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	8 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Hannah Madeley
Principal	Adrian Larkin
Website	www.cloughwood.com
Date of previous inspection	4 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cloughwood Academy is a school for boys between the ages of eight to 18. All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan. Pupils have a range of needs, but most have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, vice-principal, special educational needs coordinator, chair of the board of trustees, chair of the governing body and vice-chair of the board. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority, the school's vice-principal and the DSL.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, science, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also talked to leaders about other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, enrichment activities and after-school clubs.
- Inspectors spoke school leaders about safeguarding. Inspectors looked at documentation relating to safeguarding, including the schools single central record. They spoke with pupils, teachers, governors, parents and carers, and with a representative from the local authority in relation to how leaders keep pupils safe. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

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