

Inspection of an outstanding school: Three Towers Alternative Provision Academy

Leyland Park House, Park Road, Hindley, Wigan, Greater Manchester WN2 3RX

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Anne Isherwood. This school is part of the Rowan Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Phil Rimmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Wilson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Three Towers provides a nurturing environment where pupils are happy and feel safe. All pupils join the school part-way through their education. They are greeted by welcoming staff on their arrival into school each day. This helps them to be ready for learning.

The school successfully helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop their personal, social and emotional skills. Pupils are taught the importance of respecting differences between themselves and others. They receive help and support to regulate their own behaviour and learn strategies to reengage with their education. In the main, pupils behave well around the school, including during lesson changeovers and lunchtimes. Typically, classrooms are calm and orderly.

Pupils take part in many activities, including bowling, visits to museums and to outdoor activities, such as kayaking and walking. These activities help them to improve their mental health and well-being. Pupils have opportunities to be ready for their next steps. For example, older pupils benefit from work experience and vocational work with alternative providers, for instance in bike maintenance, construction and hair and beauty. Cooking lessons encourage pupils across the school to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The school has high expectations of all pupils' achievement. It has designed an interesting and broad curriculum. This helps most pupils to achieve well. However, curriculum thinking in a small number of subjects is not as well developed.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Many pupils join the school with gaps in their knowledge. Pupils receive a bespoke curriculum. The school successfully uses a variety of strategies that help pupils to overcome any barriers to learning that they may have. This enables pupils to learn well across a range of subjects.

In many subjects, the knowledge that pupils should be taught and in what order is thoughtfully set out. In these subjects, pupils' learning is built on carefully. However, in some other subjects, the school is still in the process of determining what pupils should know and when this new learning should be taught. This means that pupils do not learn the knowledge that they need in sufficient depth.

In the main, the school successfully uses a range of assessment strategies to check what pupils have learned and remembered. However, in one or two subjects, some staff do not check carefully enough that pupils have consolidated their knowledge before moving them on to new learning. When this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Reading is a high priority. Pupils enjoy listening to stories. Younger pupils said that they especially enjoy reading. Most of the books that pupils read from match the sounds that they already know. Pupils who fall behind in their phonics knowledge are given effective support. This helps these pupils to catch up. Most pupils learn to read with confidence and fluency as they move through the school.

The school uses a range of checks to quickly identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Most staff carefully adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as everybody else. These actions help pupils with SEND to learn well overall.

Staff quickly foster strong relationships with pupils and are positive role models. Staff are well trained to respond calmly to pupils' challenging behaviour and support them to return to class quickly. Pupils' behaviour improves over the time that they are present in the school.

Before joining Three Towers, many pupils have disrupted education and did not attend their previous schools regularly. The school communicates its high expectations about attendance to pupils and their families. Staff carefully monitor pupils' levels of attendance and use rewards to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. These strategies are helping to improve the attendance of many pupils. However, the absence rates for some pupils are still too high. Consequently, these pupils miss out on important learning.

The school has recently introduced a new curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. The programme includes a wide range of suitable topics. Pupils receive appropriate relationships, sex and health education. The school ensures

that pupils find out about British values, such as democracy. They have chances to engage in debates and to share their own points of view. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures to help them to appreciate our diverse society. They are taught about online safety.

Pupils receive relevant and impartial information, advice and guidance. They profit from attending careers fairs that involve local colleges and employers. Pupils participate in apprenticeship events that help to prepare them for their future lives.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the time that they receive to design and develop the curriculum. This helps their workload to be more manageable. The trust and local governors are suitably experienced and committed to their roles. They provide appropriate challenge and support to the school to focus on continuing to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school is still in the process of defining what pupils should learn. This hinders some pupils from learning subject knowledge in sufficient depth. In these subjects, the school should ensure that they further refine the most important knowledge that pupils should learn.
- In a small number of subjects, the school does not check carefully enough that pupils' learning is secure before moving them on to new learning. This prevents some pupils from building up their knowledge as well as they could. The school should ensure that staff check that pupils' knowledge is secure before introducing new topics and concepts.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they miss out on valuable learning and do not achieve highly. The school should continue to work with these pupils and their families to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Background

When we have judged a 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 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in February 2018.

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	140627
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10269045
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Wilson
CEO of trust	Phil Rimmer
Headteacher	Anne Isherwood
Website	www.ttapa.net
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This academy school is part of the Rowan Learning Trust.
- The school continues to operate from two separate sites. The Hindley campus, offers provision for key stages 3 and 4. It is located Leyland Park House, Park Road, Wigan WN2 3RX. The Whelley campus, caters for pupils in key stages 1 and 2. It is located at 28 Hieland Road, Wigan WN1 3UR.
- The school provides education for pupils from Years 1 to 11.
- The majority of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are dual-registered with a mainstream school and attend on a part-time basis.
- Three Towers offers places for pupils in key stages 1 to 4 who have been permanently excluded, are at risk of permanent exclusion, have medical needs or are without a school place.
- The school provides education for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan or are going through the statutory SEND assessment procedures.

- The school makes use of five unregistered alternative providers for some older pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical-education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff and leaders during the inspection.
- Inspectors visited both of the school's sites. An inspector also visited one alternative education provider which works with the school for a large number of pupils in key stage 3 and 4.
- Inspectors spoke with the director of education and the CEO of the trust, the chair of the trust board and representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of alternative providers.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of local governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed some younger pupils read to familiar staff.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders to review other areas of the curriculum.
- Too few responses were received to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered the free-text comments.
- No responses were received to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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