

Inspection of Gilbrook School

Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch, Merseyside CH49 8HE

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 March 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since March 2013. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 6 and 7 February 2024. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this school. They feel valued and know that adults will help them achieve well. Pupils know staff want the best for them. This helps them to settle into school life. For most pupils, this is the first time in their education that they feel happy and appreciated.

Through their work on the school's farm pupils develop their wider skills and knowledge. They learn to take responsibility by looking after the animals, making sure they have the right amount of food and keeping the pens clean. Pupils understand animal life cycles by watching the frogspawn develop in the school pond. They learn to work well with others and build positive friendships as pupils learn to compromise and accept different views.

Pupils love to learn outside the classroom. For example, trips to museums help them to understand what an Egyptian mummy looks like. They also visit a local beach to build their own miniature pyramid. These opportunities help pupils to remember key concepts well.

The school has high expectations and strives to give pupils an exceptional offer beyond the academic curriculum. A visit to listen to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra playing gives pupils the opportunity to enjoy and develop an appreciation of British music and culture.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is tailored to meet the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of all pupils. It has also made sure that the provision to support pupils' personal development, including their social emotional and mental health needs, is well embedded. This solid foundation helps pupils to engage and enjoy their learning purposefully. Most pupils have been out of school for long periods of time previously and many have significant gaps in their learning. The school makes sure that all pupils receive the support they need to catch up and be successful.

Since the previous inspection, the school has focused sharply on reviewing the curriculum. This work has been successful and means that pupils typically achieve well. However, in a small number of subjects this work is not fully complete. Consequently, it is not clear to teachers what key concepts pupils need to learn and remember. This hinders how well pupils learn in these subjects.

The school supports staff effectively in their professional development, especially to develop and enhance their subject leadership. However, a number of staff deliver subjects that are outside their subject specialism. They do not benefit from the support and training that they need to ensure that all curriculums are implemented as intended.

The school has introduced a new phonics programme and staff deliver it consistently well. Staff ensure that pupils know their letters and sounds and support them well to decode unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading and talk with enthusiasm about their favourite

characters and stories. Staff provide help for any pupils who need to catch up and this means that pupils gain the knowledge they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Staff know pupils extremely well and build trusting and respectful relationships with them. Staff help pupils to understand their emotions and behaviour. They use every opportunity with pupils to reinforce good manners and behaviour. For example, pupils and staff eat together and socialise at lunchtime. There is a calm, friendly and caring ethos around school. This consistent and highly effective approach ensures that over time, pupils learn to manage their own behaviour well.

The curriculum gives pupils access to a wide, rich set of experiences. Outdoor learning especially encourages pupils to push themselves beyond their comfort zones. They learn to enjoy experiences such as camping, hiking, and cycling. In the 'cub's group' they make campfires, cook and eat together. These experiences develop pupils' resilience, independence, and confidence.

Pupils learn how to stay safe online and in the community. The community police visit regularly. They teach pupils about water safety particularly. Pupils also learn first aid and have opportunities to talk to medical professionals about their work.

Pupils have opportunities to engage with others in the community and deepen their knowledge of fundamental British values. They read stories to elderly people in a local residential home. Pupils also visit local places of worship and meet with religious leaders to ask questions about their culture and beliefs.

Staff feel well supported by senior leaders. They appreciate that leaders and governors are considerate of their workload. They also value the efforts that the school takes to support their well-being, especially through initiatives such as the staffroom make-over, staff events and birthday cards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a few subjects does not provide teachers with clear information about the key concepts pupils should learn and know. This hinders the implementation of the curriculum and means that pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure all curriculums in these subjects set out precise end points so that teachers implement the intended curriculum and that pupils secure their knowledge in all subjects.
- A number of staff teach outside their main areas of expertise and have not received effective support. As a result, they do not have the knowledge and skills to implement the curriculum successfully. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise

to deliver the curriculums securely, including in subjects outside their main area of expertise.

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	105134
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10377903
Type of school	Primary Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sandra Simmons MBE
Headteacher	Kirsten Brown
Website	www.gilbrookschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 February 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health, and care plan.
- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior school leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors spoke with the governing body, including the chair of governors. An inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 pupil's work. An inspector also listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered some other subjects, through discussions about the curriculum and visiting lessons.
- 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 reviewed a range of documentation, including policies and analysis of pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils and staff about the school. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lunch and break times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with some parents.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michelle Beard

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