

Helsby Hillside Primary School

Address: Bates Lane, Helsby, Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 9LN

Unique reference number (URN): 111004

Inspection report: 3 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils progress well through the curriculum, across year groups and key stages. This progress is equally evident for disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who achieve well from their starting points. Most pupils develop secure skills in English and mathematics. This is reflected in national test results that show pupils typically outperforming others in the country. As a result, pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education and ready to start secondary school with confidence.

Disadvantaged pupils achieve well compared with similar pupils nationally. However, a gap remains between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders prioritise pupils' attendance and punctuality. Most pupils attend often and on time. There is effective support in place to remove any barriers to attendance. In the past, too few disadvantaged pupils attended school regularly, and persistent absence was high. Rates of attendance for these pupils are improving. Leaders have identified that this group needs extra help. They have introduced personalised support plans to improve these pupils' attendance. Early signs show that these actions are having a positive impact, though the full impact is not yet clear. Leaders' monitoring of this impact is not as comprehensive as it could be in order to fully inform the actions leaders are taking.

Pupils behave well at Helsby Hillside. Leaders set out a clear approach to behaviour. Staff and pupils understand it well. As a result, expectations for behaviour are high. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly way. They follow the school rules to be 'ready, respectful and safe'. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger pupils. Bullying is not tolerated. On the rare occasions when it occurs, pupils trust staff to deal with it quickly and fairly. Staff receive suitable training to manage behaviour. Leaders provide individual support for pupils who find managing their behaviour more difficult. This support is particularly helpful for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since the last inspection, leaders have redesigned the curriculum so that it is ambitious, broad and balanced. They have high expectations for what pupils should learn. This enables pupils to build the knowledge they need by the time they leave the school. Each subject emphasises developing pupils' vocabulary. Staff use questioning effectively to revisit previous learning and extend pupils' spoken and written vocabulary.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the curriculum and how it is taught. They ensure that staff have the subject knowledge required to teach it well. Clear explanations help pupils focus on new learning. Staff secure pupils' early reading, writing and mathematical

knowledge. As a result, most pupils grasp key concepts. Reading is taught effectively, using well-chosen texts that build pupils' fluency and confidence.

Leaders and staff know pupils' needs and adapt teaching appropriately for disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They identify pupils who need targeted support to address gaps in basic skills. However, some pupils would benefit from staff using checks on learning more consistently to spot and address errors in writing swiftly.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have an understanding of the quality of education and care in the early years. They hold the same high expectations for children here as they do across the rest of the school. The curriculum is designed well so that children learn the knowledge and skills that they need. Staff check children's starting points and use this information to shape activities and adapt the environment to better meet pupils' needs. New learning is introduced in a logical order that builds securely on what children already know. Across each area of learning, staff provide effective support to develop children's communication and language.

Children begin the phonics programme as soon as they enter the Reception class. Reading is prioritised, and well-trained staff help children to learn the sounds and letters needed to read and write with confidence. High-quality interactions ensure that vocabulary is modelled and children's talk is extended. Children practise their learning in the classroom and outdoors.

Those who need additional help, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive timely support. Relationships between staff and children are secure, helping children to feel safe. A well-structured induction enables staff to understand each child's needs before they start school. Leaders work in partnership with parents, carers and external professionals to ensure the provision for children in the early years is effective. Children leave the Reception class well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders and staff know pupils well. Leaders identify pupils' individual needs, including any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the needs of those known to children's social care. Well-trained staff and external agencies support these pupils effectively. They work together to reduce any barriers so that all pupils can thrive. This enables pupils to feel safe and learn well. Leaders ensure that affordability does not prevent pupils from taking part in all that the school offers. Additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is well utilised so that disadvantaged pupils do not miss out on clubs, music tuition or residential trips.

Staff adjust activities in lessons effectively so that pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. When pupils need extra help to keep up, leaders ensure that tailored support is in place. This may include one-to-one reading time or a small-group phonics session. Leaders check how well pupils benefit from this and adjust the support as needed. Regular communication with families and other professionals, including the local authority, further

ensures that pupils get the support they need. These collaborative partnerships help to successfully shape pupils' support and aspirations.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders know the school well. They understand the school's strengths and identify clear priorities for improvement. Leaders make decisions with pupils' best interests in mind. They check the impact of this on pupils' achievement. However, their work is not always precise enough for some disadvantaged pupils, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders do not always use their systems well enough to check how these pupils are learning. This limits how well they can support staff to improve outcomes for these pupils.

Governors meet their statutory duties. They provide support and hold leaders to account. Governors check that resources are managed well so that pupils can learn successfully. For example, they ensure that pupils facing barriers to their wellbeing receive help at the right time. They understand the importance of early support and make sure that staff have access to the resources they need to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality training. This training helps staff build their knowledge and develop confidence in delivering the curriculum. Leaders choose training carefully so that it matches the needs of the school. Staff value this and say that it helps them improve their practice. Leaders also think carefully about staff workload. Staff appreciate the steps leaders take to look after their wellbeing. When new initiatives are introduced, leaders make thoughtful decisions about what this means for staff. They ensure that staff have the time they need to complete additional tasks. This helps staff to feel well supported and able to focus on teaching.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders provide a broad range of opportunities that support pupils' personal development. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from visits that extend their learning beyond the classroom. Pupils relish the opportunity to take part in residential trips. They build confidence by trying challenging activities and deepen friendships with classmates. Sport and music are given high priority. Each pupil has the opportunity to represent the school in sports matches or events each year and many pupils learn a musical instrument.

Leaders have given careful thought to the curriculum for personal, social and health education. Children in the early years know how to stay healthy. They enjoy eating fruit and can talk about why it is good for them. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 build their knowledge over time. They understand the importance of staying physically healthy. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to learn about mental health during regular wellbeing days. As part of these opportunities, pupils enjoy learning outdoors. This helps pupils to appreciate the natural world. Older pupils talk confidently about healthy relationships. They know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the fundamental British values. For example, older pupils know that democracy helps everyone to have their say.

Assemblies and daily routines give pupils time to pause and reflect. Pupils learn about cultures that are different from their own. They think about themes linked to the school's values, including respect and celebrating difference. Pupils know that the law provides protection against discrimination. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. Leaders provide caring pastoral support. Pupils use this when they need someone to talk to. This helps them feel a sense of belonging to the school and its community.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils at Helsby Hillside enjoy coming to school. They arrive each morning to a warm welcome from staff and their friends. Pupils, including children in the early years, settle quickly to morning activities. They are keen to learn and appreciate the range of ways in which staff make lessons interesting. Pupils achieve well and are ready for their next steps. By the end of Year 6, pupils have the knowledge and skills that they need to move on to secondary school. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are typically supported to achieve well from their starting points. However, these pupils do not achieve as well as their non-disadvantaged peers. For example, in writing, some disadvantaged pupils make errors in spelling and vocabulary.

Pupils are proud to be 'Hillsiders'. They behave well. They listen carefully to staff in lessons and show the same respect when listening to their classmates. Older pupils act as positive role models to those in younger years. For example, play leaders organise games and buddies help pupils who are new to the school to settle quickly. Pupils in leadership roles make a positive contribution to the school. Peer mentors are highly regarded. They utilise their special training to lend a listening ear to pupils who may have a worry. The school council enables pupils to contribute positively to school life. Such opportunities enable pupils to begin to be prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs such as dodgeball, cooking, gardening and choir. Pupils who are disadvantaged are supported to take part in activities alongside their friends.

Pupils feel well cared for and safe. Bullying is rare but swiftly addressed if it happens. Most pupils come to school regularly, although this needs to continue to improve for a small number of pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to focus on improving attendance so that pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend school more regularly.
- Leaders should use information from the school's systems to guide their actions and help reduce the attainment gap so that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers.

- Leaders should ensure that staff use checks on learning more consistently to identify and address errors in spelling and vocabulary promptly, so that all pupils can strengthen their writing.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jo Taylor.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff during the inspection. They also spoke with some members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Adam Khan

Lead inspector:

Frith Murphy, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Susan Ralph, Ofsted Inspector

Elliot Costas-Walker, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 3 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

197

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

8.63%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.02%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

8.12%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	68%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	61%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	84%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	86%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	81%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	84%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	79%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	78%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	88%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	53%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	73%	62%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	53%	68%	-14 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	73%	80%	-6 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	78%	-11 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S
2022/23 (final)	67%	77%	-11 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	80%	-20 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.2%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.5%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	12.1%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.9%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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