

Inspection of Maple Grove School

Clare Avenue, Chester, Cheshire CH2 3HR

Inspection dates: 30 November–2 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils appreciate this warm and welcoming school. Regardless of their different starting points, they soon begin to feel part of the school community. Pupils develop positive, trusting relationships with staff. These relationships help pupils to feel confident and ready to learn.

Leaders and staff want the best for pupils. Pupils strive to live up to these high expectations. They listen carefully in lessons and enjoy answering teachers' questions. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

Pupils enjoy collecting special tokens for good behaviour. They know that when they have enough, they will be rewarded with an exciting experience such as a trip to a café, or a visit to the local park. Bullying is unacceptable at Maple Grove. Pupils know that staff would put a stop to it if ever it occurred.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know who to talk to if ever they are worried. Parents and carers appreciate the care and education that leaders and staff provide. One parent said, 'The staff are all brilliant, passionate and caring, not just to children but to parents too.'

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

Leaders work well with staff, parents and a range of professionals to ensure that pupils receive an education which suits their needs. Most pupils have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have created a curriculum that is broad and ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have considered carefully the most important knowledge that pupils should learn in each year group. They have set clear goals for pupils to achieve by the time they leave the school. Leaders have set out this knowledge in the curriculum plans.

The curriculum is organised clearly so that pupils build up their knowledge in a logical order. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned. For example, in mathematics, teachers make sure that pupils revisit important number facts very regularly. When teachers introduce new learning, they check in lessons to make sure that pupils have understood.

In most areas of the curriculum, subject leaders have had training to help them to carry out their roles well. For example, they know how to check that the curriculums in their subjects are helping pupils to know more and remember more. Pupils learn well in these subjects as a result, from the early years to key stage 4. In a few subjects leaders have not had as much training. This limits their ability to check how well the curriculum supports pupils' learning in these subjects.

Pupils learn to read fluently and with confidence, including those in the early years. Leaders have made sure all staff have had training in phonics. Many pupils have

gaps in their phonics learning when they first join the school. Leaders and staff are expert in identifying these gaps. They plan learning to help pupils catch up. Reading books contain words that enable pupils to practise the sounds they have learned. Pupils are proud of their success in reading and are developing a love of stories and books.

The school is a calm and orderly place for pupils. The particular learning needs of some pupils mean that sometimes they need support to manage their own behaviour. The highly-skilled team of staff provide this support sensitively and effectively. This helps pupils to cope with difficult situations and to continue with their learning.

Pupils take part in a range of activities beyond the academic curriculum. They enjoy fundraising activities and community events. They learn about other faiths and cultures and can explain what they have learned about diversity in society. Leaders provide activities that help pupils to learn about the world of work, for example through visits to the school by local zoo-keepers. Older pupils receive expert careers guidance. Pupils love their weekly horse-riding lessons and taking care of the school's chickens and guinea pigs. These activities help pupils to develop personally.

The proprietor body keeps a careful check on the effectiveness of the school's curriculum. A member of the board ensures that the independent school standards are met and holds school leaders properly to account for their work to improve the school.

The school building is clean and attractive and is well resourced. Outside there is a spacious playground for games, as well as natural areas to support learning about nature and the environment.

Leaders ensure that they follow all health and safety requirements. The school's website displays information about policies, including the safeguarding policy, and about admissions. The school's accessibility plan sets out how the school supports pupils with disabilities to access the curriculum. The school does not exclude pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that the safeguarding of pupils is prioritised. All staff have a range of safeguarding training. Staff know how to recognise the signs of abuse. They know how to report any concerns about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders work with a wide range of agencies and professionals to ensure pupils and their families receive the help they need promptly.

The curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils learn the importance of healthy relationships. They learn how to use the internet safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a small number of subjects, subject leaders lack training to enable them to lead their subjects well. This limits the extent to which they can provide guidance and support to their colleagues in implementing the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that all subject leaders have appropriate training to enable them to support colleagues and staff in implementing the curriculum effectively in all key stages, including the early years.
- Some subject leaders do not have a clear enough picture of how the curriculum is helping pupils to know more and remember more. This is because their work to check the impact of the curriculum is at an early stage. Leaders must now ensure that this work is developed further so that all subject leaders can evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' ability to know more and remember more.

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 provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	147737
DfE registration number	896/6008
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10203847
Type of school	Independent school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Limited
Chair	Ann Henderson
Headteacher	Ben Reading
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,082 to £71,057
Telephone number	01244 257950
Website	https://www.maplegroveschool.org/
Email address	info@maplegroveschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 7 September 2020. This was its first standard inspection.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils who have a range of SEND, including autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, and with subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading; mathematics; personal, social, health and economic education; and design technology. For each deep dive inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils about school life and met with leaders and pupils to discuss provision for pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour. The inspectors looked at documentation associated with these areas. Where appropriate, an adult was present when inspectors spoke to pupils.
- The inspector spoke with a range of staff to discuss leaders' support for them.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding. The inspectors also spoke with staff to understand how they keep pupils safe and reviewed the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.
- The inspectors spoke with school leaders, viewed parts of the school premises and looked at a range of documentation to check for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Mavis Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lenford White

Ofsted Inspector

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