

# Inspection of Presdales School

Hoe Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9NX

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Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Sixth-form provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Matthew Warren. This school is the sole member of the Presdales School Academy Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jacqueline Harvey.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding 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 21 May 2008.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive at Presdales School. Pupils explore a wide range of interests. They access a vast range of clubs, from crochet to water polo. There are numerous overseas trips. Many pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. There are also chances to develop leadership skills as subject ambassadors, school council representatives and prefects. The school's 'super-curriculum' gives them opportunities to research and deepen their knowledge of a wide range of subjects. These opportunities help pupils become confident and active young citizens.

Pupils have positive relationships with staff and each other. They are kind, positive and polite. They know how to keep themselves safe. They feel valued. Pupils, and their parents and carers, appreciate the support that they receive.

The school fully prepares pupils for the next stages of their education or employment. Pupils learn extensively about the world of work and what it is like to go to university.

Pupils respond positively to the challenge of a highly ambitious curriculum. They commit themselves wholeheartedly to their learning. They work enthusiastically and exceptionally hard in lessons. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve highly.

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

The school has very high expectations of pupils' learning and their conduct. Pupils follow a broad curriculum in key stages 3 and 4. Most pupils study two languages. The curriculum is carefully designed. Teachers understand how pupils learn and the knowledge they need to succeed. Important knowledge is introduced in chunks so that pupils can build their understanding securely over time. Teachers regularly revisit previous learned knowledge. Pupils make links with new learning so that it sticks in their memory. Teachers identify likely misconceptions accurately. They ensure that pupils' grasp of knowledge is accurate.

Teachers know the needs of their pupils very well. They adapt the curriculum with great skill. All pupils, including those with SEND, access learning successfully. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. If there are any gaps, these are swiftly identified and teaching adapted to support pupils to catch up. Consequently, pupils of all abilities can tackle challenging tasks. They produce high-quality work across the full range of subjects.

The school understands the vital importance of reading. Many opportunities to read are given to pupils, for example across the curriculum in all subjects and during form time. Reading is celebrated. Staff check how well pupils can read. When pupils need additional help, they receive effective support. This helps them become fluent and accurate readers.

Students in the sixth form receive an exceptional education. This prepares them well for their next steps in life. They enjoy studying a demanding curriculum. Students develop their skills as scholars. They are challenged to think and reflect on what they learn. Students discuss the world around them confidently and articulately. They learn how to study independently. Students actively contribute to the school and local community. Many sixth-form students are 'big sisters' and 'big brothers'. They support younger pupils in lessons. Some students volunteer in a local special school.

Pupils are determined to be the best they can be. They behave exceptionally well in lessons. Pupils support each other as they learn. On the very rare occasions that pupils do not manage their behaviour well, staff take the time to discuss it with them. As a result, the behaviour of these pupils improves. Pupils who find it hard to attend school are given personalised support in the learning hub; this helps to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum prepares pupils for adulthood. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy and respectful relationships. They are aware of dangers such as county lines. They know how to spot when someone is trying to encourage them to act inappropriately. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that all pupils can access the information they need to keep safe. Pupils learn about careers in all key stages. They research different jobs, participate in mock interviews and meet a host of employers.

Staff at all levels, including trustees, are determined for every pupil to succeed and develop. Leaders constantly reflect on how pupils' experiences in and out of lessons can be made even better.

Staff are given high-quality training. They work together with colleagues to develop new approaches in the classroom. Staff feel well supported to develop their knowledge and skills.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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

|   |  |
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| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 137985   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Hertfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10242268   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | Secondary Comprehensive  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy converter  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 11 to 18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Girls  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 1,175  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 275  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Jacqueline Harvey  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                | Matthew Warren   |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.presdales.herts.sch.uk">www.presdales.herts.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 21 May 2008  |

## Information about this school

- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- 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

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with a range of leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with trustees and spoke to an external adviser working with the school.
- An inspector met with early career teachers and staff involved in their induction.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. They met with groups of pupils to discuss behaviour in the school.
- 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 scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 244 responses and 191 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, the 87 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and the 251 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey. Inspectors also spoke to two parents.

### **Inspection team**

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Steve Woodley, lead inspector | His Majesty’s Inspector |
| Jess Pearce                   | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Susan Sutton                  | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Alison Moore                  | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Al Mistrano                   | His Majesty’s Inspector |

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