

Co-op Academy Hillside

Address: Ridgeview Road, Prenton, Merseyside, CH43 9HG

Unique reference number (URN): 149838

Inspection report: 28 April 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.

Strong standard ●

Early years

Strong standard ●

The early years is the bedrock of the school's success. This is because of the expert leadership, well-considered curriculum and skilful teaching, which start in the provision for 2-year-olds. Children's time at school is steeped in happy times listening to stories, such as about a hungry caterpillar, and discussing these with staff. Teachers also ensure that children benefit greatly from talk with staff about a range of well-chosen topics as well as opportunities to sing, be active and play with games and activities.

Teachers and teaching assistants quickly spot children's difficulties with learning, including any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff work very well with parents and carers, as well as with other professionals, in support of children's needs.

Children, including those with SEND, flourish in the early years. They achieve very well. Children develop many essential skills, such as to count and solve mathematical problems or to follow routines and be sensible. In the Reception Year, staff very successfully teach children phonics and writing. Staff help children to push past hesitation and to become confident in themselves when they meet new people and try new experiences. These skills prepare children very well for their learning in Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have set the school on a smart way forward for its work on inclusion. They are determined to understand the multiple challenges that different pupils, parents and carers face. They strive to include pupils who have been excluded from other schools, so that no one is left out of education. Leaders achieve this impressively well. Parents say that being included makes a significant difference to their lives and that of their children.

Leaders' clear thinking and expert support for staff results in the early and accurate identification of pupils' needs. The school dismantles obstacles to pupils' success, including for pupils known, or previously known, to social care. Leaders spend extra funding very well to enhance the prospects of disadvantaged pupils, and, as a result, these pupils excel in their learning and wider development. The school makes thoughtful use of alternative provision for a part of some pupils' education.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit greatly from the school's ambitious curriculum and skilful teaching. In the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND, pupils very successfully follow the school curriculum in calm, well-managed classrooms. Leaders and staff expertly support any needs that pupils may have, such as behaviours related to their autism or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

During the 3 years that this new school has existed, pupils' achievement has improved markedly. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Pupils are confident, skilful, readers, talkers and mathematicians, well prepared for their future learning.

Typically, pupils, such as those who join the school with limited recent experience of being in education, make large gains in their knowledge. So too do the many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This includes those who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND.

Pupils build on their secure understanding of phonics. In Year 6 in 2025, pupils' reading performance in national tests was above average. This means that pupils can quickly and confidently access other parts of the school's curriculum. Published information about pupils' writing skills is below average. This does not fully reflect the positive progress that pupils make. Nevertheless, on occasion, in a few other subjects, pupils do not remember some key information that they have learned previously.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders, including those from the trust, keep a very close check on information about pupils' attendance and behaviour. They use their insights to spot issues early and to chart a clear way forward. The school seeks to bring pupils who were frequently absent from their previous schools back into having a full education. The school's considerable success on attendance is not fully shown by the published attendance information. Pupils' attendance is below average, but for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities it is average. Leaders identify what gets in the way of pupils attending school, and the school then acts. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving over time. Leaders strive to ensure that all pupils gain maximum benefit by coming to school.

Pupils typically behave well. They are keen learners who listen carefully to staff and cooperate effectively with other pupils. Skilful leaders and staff take a positive, supportive approach to help all pupils with behaviour. They consider very carefully how best to support pupils who struggle to manage their own feelings and behaviour. The school does not tolerate serious misbehaviour such as bullying. It also works with parents and carers to help pupils on how to use the internet responsibly at home.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Since forming this new school, leaders have successfully introduced well-thought-out subject curriculums. Leaders ensure that staff are skilled in teaching phonics and reading. Staff provide individual pupils with swift, extra support on phonics, if needed. The school's work on mathematics focuses on how to build pupils' secure knowledge and their passion for this subject. Recently, leaders have skilfully strengthened the school's curriculum and teaching of writing, including an increased focus on handwriting, grammar and punctuation.

Leaders anchor the staff team in up-to-date thinking about how pupils learn best, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders support staff to develop the expertise that they need, such as how to inspire pupils about learning.

Teachers and teaching assistants use words and gestures skilfully to communicate with pupils and to build pupils' understanding. Teachers identify the actions that they and their colleagues will take to help pupils who find learning more difficult. This approach results in thoughtful support for the learning of all pupils, including those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND.

Generally, staff get to know each pupil's needs well. On occasions, some teaching is based less securely on what pupils know and remember.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Trustees and leaders read the route ahead for the school with skill and care. They plot a clear and ambitious course for its work. Trustees meet their duties fully. The school is successful. The quality of its work, such as in teaching and pupils' achievement, is effective and continues to improve. Inclusion and the early years provision are strengths.

Leaders think carefully about how to support pupils, especially those who struggle with learning and/or being at school. Leaders solve problems and create solutions for the benefit of pupils, staff, parents and carers. From first stepping into the school at the office, families encounter courtesy, honesty and respect from leaders and staff. Leaders have established classrooms, corridors and display areas that celebrate pupils' learning thoughtfully.

Leaders understand the importance of providing themselves and staff with high-quality professional learning. The school gains from its links with some other trust schools and from some shared leadership roles. Staff, including teachers new to their careers, develop much of the expertise that they need. For instance, they develop lots of expertise in the curriculum, teaching, special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding. Staff are very positive about the work of leaders to help them to work effectively with pupils who face difficulties in their learning.

Leaders, including from the trust, take successful steps to ensure that staff have high wellbeing. Staff have a reasonable workload. The whole staff team is highly positive about working at the school. The team describes the school as being like a supportive family.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders think carefully what opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society pupils need at school. For example, pupils meet with visitors and take part in well-considered educational trips. Pupils' wider learning opportunities, such as about charitable fundraising, or the importance of generating renewable energy, are very successful.

Pupils know about healthy relationships and keeping themselves safe, including online. They learn about healthy eating and make responsible choices, such as when they order food from the school's canteen for lunch.

Pupils learn to be responsible. Older pupils in the school aid the smooth running of the day. For instance, some have an important role to sweep the hall clean after breakfast club and lunchtime. Pupils fulfil their roles with pride and dedication.

The school provides pupils with well-thought-out pastoral support. All pupils have many opportunities to talk about their feelings and frustrations as well as their hopes and aspirations. Where needed, the school provides pupils with well-considered, additional extra help, such as for their wellbeing. In the specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders expertly prioritise pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs for extra support.

Leaders ensure that the school provides lots of well-considered opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils who face difficulties in their lives have an equal chance to celebrate their passions and abilities. Leaders use extra funding thoughtfully to benefit pupils' personal development. For example, they make sure that disadvantaged pupils and others who may need extra help can take part in the school's popular breakfast club.

Pupils know about cultural diversity. The school teaches pupils about fundamental British values and about the aspects of people's identity that are protected by law. However, pupils' ability to explain these aspects of their knowledge is not well developed.

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

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), feel happy and safe at this calm, supportive school. They have a proper chance to feel that they belong, some for the first time in their education. Leaders and staff act to help pupils to successfully overcome challenges in their lives. Staff are very interested in pupils as unique individuals. Pupils' own words or other ways of communicating their needs and ideas are valued by the kind, caring staff.

Pupils learn to trust their instincts when under pressure. This is because staff help pupils to develop important habits and the skills to use when situations are unexpected or difficult. At this school, staff's support for pupils' learning and wellbeing is well thought out.

Pupils' successful learning begins in the early years. From their starting points, pupils make positive strides forward in their skills and knowledge. This success includes the significant progress made by pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. Mostly, in reading, writing and mathematics, pupils attain similarly to other pupils nationally.

Many pupils attend school regularly. Those who arrive with low previous attendance from their time at other schools quickly discover that they want to be at this school. Leaders and staff want this for pupils too. Pupils can be themselves here, as well as make friends. They enjoy their lessons, as well as clubs such as chess, cricket and crochet. Pupils benefit from special experiences, for instance trips to the cinema or to the beach at New Brighton.

Pupils behave sensibly, including in learning activities. They love the chance to go trampolining if they receive a 'golden ticket' for their positive behaviour. Pupils do not worry about bullying because staff act swiftly to halt any unkindness between pupils, if it arises.

Next steps

- Leaders should further refine staff's checks of pupils' learning to more effectively identify what pupils know and remember, to inform teaching so that pupils achieve as well as they can.
 - Leaders should ensure that their recent revision to the curriculum and teaching for writing continues to improve pupils' handwriting, grammar and punctuation.
 - Leaders should continue with their recent and increasingly successful work to ensure that all pupils attend school when they should.
 - Leaders should build on pupils' existing knowledge, so they develop a more detailed understanding of fundamental British values and protected characteristics.
 - Leaders should ensure the continued improvement of early years, and of inclusion, to achieve and sustain exceptional standards of support and teaching that have a transformational impact on the outcomes and experiences of all children and pupils.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Co-op Academies 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), Chris Tomlinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Russell Gill.

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 (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with leaders, including the executive headteacher, head of school, special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, and inclusion lead, during the inspection.

Inspectors spoke with representatives of the trust, including the chair of the trust board and other people involved with governance of the school, and with the CEO and the regional director.

Inspectors spoke with representatives of the local authority and each of the 2 alternative provisions used by the school.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has an executive headteacher, Katy Bergman, who is responsible for this school and 2 others.

The school includes 2 specially resourced provisions for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs and autism. Both classes are known as 'Co-op Connect'. One of these resourced provisions is for 12 pupils in the early years and key stage 1, who attend for a maximum of 4 terms. During this time, their needs are assessed to determine provision for their future schooling. The provision has 5 pupils on roll at present. The other provision offers 8 full-time places for pupils in key stage 2. Eight pupils currently attend.

The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, including one that is unregistered.

Head of School: Jennie Hamer

Lead inspector:

Tim Vaughan, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Juliet Francis, Ofsted Inspector

Gary Anders, Ofsted Inspector

Anna Carroll, Ofsted 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

168

Below 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

260

Close to 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)

50.00%

Well above 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

7.74%

Well above 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

19.64%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

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

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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		61%	
2024/25 (final)	48%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	46%	61%	Below
2022/23		60%	

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		74%	
2024/25 (final)	83%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	62%	74%	Below
2022/23		73%	

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		72%	
2024/25 (final)	52%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	72%	Below
2022/23		71%	

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		73%	
2024/25 (final)	74%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	62%	73%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23		73%	

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		46%	
2024/25 (final)	43%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	25%	46%	Below
2022/23		44%	

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		62%	
2024/25 (final)	86%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	42%	62%	Below
2022/23		60%	

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		59%	
2024/25 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33%	58%	Below
2022/23		58%	

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%	
2024/25 (final)	79%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23		59%	

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		68%	
2024/25 (final)	43%	69%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	67%	-42 pp
2022/23		66%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	86%	81%	5 pp
2023/24 (final)	42%	80%	-38 pp
2022/23		78%	

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		78%	
2024/25 (final)	50%	78%	-28 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	78%	-44 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		77%	

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		80%	
2024/25 (final)	79%	81%	-2 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp
2022/23		79%	

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 (3 term)	6.5%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	6.0%	5.5%	Close to average

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 (3 term)	17.7%	13.0%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	18.9%	14.6%	Above

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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