

City of Peterborough Academy, Special School

Reeves Way, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 5LQ

Inspection dates

14–15 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders at all levels have sustained good-quality teaching and learning since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils are making good progress.
- Leaders and trustees are ensuring that the school continues to improve. Safeguarding is effective and procedures to ensure pupils' safety have recently been strengthened.
- The curriculum and assessment are not fully adapted to the needs of lower attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.
- Leaders are not ensuring that incident logs and records of the use of the calming room contain the date and time when parents are informed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. This promotes good learning and progress.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who need extra help.
- Occasionally teachers provide learning tasks to pupils that are either too easy or too difficult, which limits progress.
- Sometimes teachers do not take full account of pupils' education, health and care plans when setting targets for learning.
- Behaviour is good, and pupils have positive attitudes to learning and stay safe.
- The early years provision is good, ensuring that children make good progress in learning.
- Some parents expressed concerns about the school in Parent View.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and assessment so that all pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently provide achievable tasks to deepen the thinking of all pupils so that pupils of different abilities neither find learning tasks too easy nor too difficult
 - take full account of the recommended provision for learning in pupils' education, health and care plans when setting challenging targets for learning.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - making sure that the curriculum and assessment are fully adapted to the needs of lower attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder
 - consistently recording the date and time that parents are informed in all incident logs and in the use of the calming room
 - strengthening links with those parents who are most concerned about the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since September, the new leadership team, under the direction of the executive principal, is driving improvements forward. Leaders have developed strong teamwork among staff, whose morale is high. This is reflected in the overwhelming positive responses in staff questionnaire returns.
- Many parents are also pleased with the school. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction in their Parent View returns, and 41% would not recommend the school to other parents. Nevertheless, school leaders and the trust are trying to improve relationships with those parents who have concerns about the school, and advisory council members have already held a meeting with these parents to seek to resolve their concerns.
- Leaders have an accurate view of most aspects of the work of the school and use this information well to set clear priorities for improvement.
- Good leadership of teaching, based on effective monitoring, is sustaining good-quality teaching in the school despite the recent changes to the leadership team. Leaders and a representative of the standards committee of the trustees regularly carry out visits to lessons, review pupils' progress and look at pupils' work. They use this information to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. Any weaknesses identified are supported through training, and strengths are recognised and linked to salary progression.
- The curriculum is generally well thought out and its aims and vision meet the needs of higher attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. Leaders have not reviewed the curriculum aims and vision to reflect the changing intake of pupils, which includes an increasing proportion of non-verbal pupils. Nevertheless, the broad range of subjects on offer to higher attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, reflecting the national curriculum, is adapted to meet the needs of these lower attaining pupils.
- Teachers benefit from good support from healthcare professionals and speech and language therapists to take account of the various needs of pupils.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing communication and social interaction skills throughout the school, particularly in the early years and early years foundation stages 1 and 2. Leaders also ensure that teachers give priority to the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in the lower school with a wider range of other subjects, including science and the foundation subjects of the national curriculum.
- Pupils of secondary-school age benefit from an increasingly wide range of academic and vocational examination courses to choose from. These are linked to their chosen pathways following high-quality careers guidance. This enables them to make informed choices for further education, employment or training.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of after-school clubs, including sports clubs, and a range of visits and visitors to the school. Pupils develop confidence and self-reliance through their forest school work.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum promotes British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This is done through a range of well-thought-out curriculum topics within the planned programme of personal, social and health education and through assemblies.
- The new commercial assessment system is appropriate for higher attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and tracks their progress across a range of subjects. However, it is not entirely relevant to the increasing number of low-attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, including non-verbal pupils referred to the school each year. This is because it fails to measure the very small steps of progress across different subjects that these pupils make. Nevertheless, leaders have introduced new assessment systems to measure the social interaction and communication skills of these pupils, but have yet to develop a system to measure the small gains in learning for low-attaining pupils.
- Leaders are ensuring that the curriculum promotes equality of opportunity, enabling all pupils to make equally good progress over time. Records show that the school tackles bullying well and staff do not tolerate any form of prejudicial behaviour. As a result, there are few incidents of bullying recorded and relationships are generally good.
- Leaders are making good use of pupil premium funding to provide extra support for learning. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils are making equally good progress and sometimes better progress than their peers.
- The school is making good use of Year 7 catch-up funding to provide additional resources and support. This enables these pupils to make accelerated progress in English and mathematics.
- Leaders are also making good use of primary physical education and sport funding to provide extra equipment and coaching and to increase the number of sports clubs. This has led to an increase in participation in sport and enthusiasm for sport.

Governance of the school

- The trustees provide good support for the school through the local governing body. The standards committee of the trustees has a good knowledge of data and uses this well to shape priorities for improvement. Minutes of meetings show that they hold the school to account for its additional spending.
- A representative of the standards committee visits the school regularly to carry out joint learning walks, and scrutinises the work of the school, including its safeguarding arrangements.
- Trustees have an accurate view of teaching and oversee arrangements for managing staff performance, including the performance of the senior leaders. They ensure that the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors are thorough and fully comply with legislation. These procedures are monitored closely by staff. Risk assessments are in place for all pupils and activities. Leaders are ensuring high levels of supervision at all times in the school.
- Records of behaviour, bullying and physical restraint are in place and action taken is clearly recorded. Policies and procedures for promoting the safety and well-being of pupils are implemented effectively. However, leaders are not ensuring that the dates and times that parents are informed when incidents occur, or the calming room is used, are consistently recorded. These relatively minor shortcomings in record keeping have no impact on pupils' safety, although they give some parents cause for concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good teaching identified at the previous inspection has been sustained.
- Teachers make good use of the assessments for higher attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. They use this in lessons to ask challenging questions to probe pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. As a result, these pupils make good progress over time.
- However, work in pupils' books shows some weaknesses in the use of assessment. Occasionally, teachers provide work that is either too easy or too difficult for some pupils. A few pupils confirmed this in discussions about their learning.
- Teachers do not always take enough account of the learning provision specified in individual education, health and care plans when setting learning targets for pupils to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- Teachers are not able to accurately track and record the progress of low-attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder because leaders have not fully developed systems for assessment that measure the very small steps of progress for this group of pupils.
- Teachers generally use their good subject knowledge and good knowledge of their pupils well to match learning activities at the right level to deepen the thinking of pupils with different abilities.
- The outcomes of learning walks and lesson visits over time demonstrate that teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. This was also confirmed in visits to lessons during this inspection. As a result, pupils concentrate on learning, try hard and make good progress.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have more complex needs, such as those who need additional help with communication and social interaction. For example, they use a variety of well-chosen resources, such as pictures, concrete materials and signing, to augment communication for non-verbal pupils so that they fully access learning. As a result, these pupils make good progress over time in social interaction and communication skills. They also provide good support for pupils who need additional help in a wider range of subjects, including mathematics and science.

- Teachers and teaching assistants systematically record pupils' progress in reading records. They encourage pupils to read widely and often, in school and at home. The teaching of phonics is good, and over time, this enables pupils to use their phonics skills to read and write unfamiliar words.
- The teaching of basics skills is good. For example, teachers make good use of resources to develop the younger pupils' handwriting and pencil control. They ask probing questions to deepen pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Teachers set high expectations for the oldest pupils to achieve at least five recognised qualifications before they leave school, which they do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they like the school and feel safe. Nearly all staff and the majority of parents, but not all, agree.
- Pupils adopt safe practices in school and were observed playing safely together at breaktime and lunchtime, moving safely from one area of the school to another and handing equipment safely, including computers.
- Pupils say that they are taught about the safe use of computers and the potential dangers of social networking sites.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment and staff maintain high levels of supervision to ensure that pupils stay safe.
- Pupils benefit from good pastoral support to ensure that they settle into school and engage with learning. They said that staff help them when they feel anxious.
- Staff work closely with therapists and healthcare professionals to ensure that pupils with poorly developed social interaction skills and poor communication build in confidence and self-esteem.
- Older pupils receive good careers guidance and advice, which enables them to make informed choices about their future.
- Pupils develop confidence and improve their self-esteem as they move through the school, and their spiritual development is enhanced through celebration assemblies and opportunities for reflection.
- They learn about right from wrong through their behaviour targets and system of rewards and deepen their understanding of moral issues by learning about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Pupils show respect and appreciation for different cultures and traditions and display the British values of tolerance and respect for other cultures through topics on world religions and the celebration of different festivals.
- They develop an increasing awareness of the impact of good behaviour on their learning and progress as they move through the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school's records of behaviour over time demonstrate that pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. This was confirmed during the inspection.
- Pupils respond well to the new system of targets for behaviour and responses to learning. Pupils are considerate to others and listen carefully to teachers.
- They have good attitudes to learning, which is reflected in the pride they take with their work and their eagerness to learn.
- Staff provide good role models for pupils' behaviour. Most staff and the majority of parents, but not all, agree that behaviour is good and bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Exclusions, which involve only a small number of pupils, are falling and most pupils attend regularly, reflecting their enjoyment of school. Attendance is broadly average compared with that of special schools nationally, and the school works successfully to reduce the rates of persistent absence through first-day calling and home visits where necessary.
- There are a few recorded incidents of bullying, poor behaviour or restraint, which are recorded and dealt with appropriately.
- Records show that children in the early years provision behave well and stay safe.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils throughout the school make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including mathematics and English, from their different starting points.
- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge well below the expectations for their ages. Many children enter with poor communication and social interaction skills. Accurate records show that from these low starting points, children make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good.
- Observations of phonics sessions over time and hearing pupils read show that Year 1 pupils make good progress in phonics from their different starting points each year. Between 2014 and 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the phonics reading check declined. This decline is closely linked with the increase in the proportion of pupils who have more complex needs. In 2017, an above-average proportion of pupils reached the required standard in the phonics screening check.
- Primary-aged pupils at key stages 1 and 2 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching is good. However, in 2016, no pupils at key stage 2 were working at greater depth because there were no higher attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder in this cohort.
- Pupils who have more complex needs, such as non-verbal pupils, make good progress because teaching assistants break tasks down into small achievable steps and make good use of a variety of well-chosen resources to develop their communication skills.
- Pupils who need to catch up quickly, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and sometimes better progress than their classmates. This is because the

school makes good use of pupil premium funding to secure their learning.

- The most able pupils in the school, including the very few most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their relatively higher starting points because teachers use assessments well to set aspirational targets and set high expectations for their learning. For example, the oldest pupils familiarise themselves with examination courses in Year 9 before taking entry level. Then in Year 11, the most able are entered for a range of GCSE subjects.
- Older pupils make good progress towards their examinations and are well prepared for entry into college or employment. All pupils who left Year 11 in 2016 gained at least five qualifications, with the most able gaining between seven and eight qualifications, including good GCSEs. These pupils successfully transferred to employment or college to pursue a range of academic and vocational courses such as GCSEs, engineering, motor vehicle maintenance and animal care. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Primary-aged pupils make good progress in physical education because of good use of additional physical education and sport funding to provide more sports clubs, coaching and equipment. Pupils were observed exercising vigorously and safely in the playground.
- Pupils in Year 7 make good progress in English and mathematics because the school makes good use of the additional Year 7 catch-up funding. A review of the use of this spending shows that these pupils complete extended pieces of writing and develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- All pupils have additional funding for their special educational needs, which is used effectively to provide good teaching and support to meet their individual needs.
- Occasionally, progress is limited when teachers do not take full account of the provision for learning and achievement specified in pupils' education, health and care plans.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good and the early years leader has a secure picture of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Good leadership has led to good partnerships within the trust and local maintained schools. This has led to improvements that have been successfully introduced and maintained. For example, leaders have ensured that assessments are accurate through moderation.
- Self-evaluation of the early years provision is over generous as it is largely descriptive and not fully supported by secure evidence over time. There are currently no early years children in the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Children enter the school below the expected levels of development for their ages. They are assessed on entry and an accurate baseline is recorded in the prime areas of learning. This is used

effectively to plan learning activities in other areas of learning. Case study information records parents' contributions to these baselines. The learning journeys, along with home-school books, are well received by parents, who are kept well informed about the progress their children are making.

- The evidence from the school's own assessment information, details of achievement towards the 2016 early learning goals and work scrutiny show that progress is good from low starting points. Detailed planning based on topics and themes takes full account of children's education, health and care plans.
- Leaders and staff have an accurate baseline picture of children on entry and use this to ensure that children receive the support they require. Leaders have sought external support from other agencies, including speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, to provide greater access to learning for non-verbal children. This has led to the restructuring of learning spaces to enable these children to maximise their potential.
- Inspection evidence supports the school's view that good provision leads to good outcomes for children. The curriculum, as evidenced through planning, learning journeys and case studies, provides an appropriate range of activities and experiences that enable progress towards the early learning goals from individual starting points. The school's assessed information shows that 75% of children in 2017 were mastering their targets early and were therefore exceeding them.
- The provision makes a good contribution to children's outcomes and personal development. For example, the setting provides children with activities to enable them to develop their awareness of risks through exploring their environments, for example with outdoor learning resources.
- Year 1 pupils (those who have recently left the early years provision) cooperated well with each other during the inspection, especially during their outdoor phonics treasure hunt. They behaved safely and respected each other's space.
- The school meets the learning and welfare requirements of the early years. Children stay safe because staff promote their safety well.

School details

Unique reference number	138271
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10023556

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Hamlin
Executive Principal	Tracey Ydlibi
Head of School	Laura Ives
Telephone number	01733 821403
Website	www.copaspecialschool.org
Email address	tydlibi@copaspecialschool.org
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Since the last inspection, the academy trust has changed its name from Greenwood

Dale Foundation Trust to Greenwood Academy Trust. The trust remains responsible for governance and statutory responsibilities but also provides non-statutory challenge and support through the school's advisory council, which is made up of a group of parents and members of the community.

- A new executive principal and a new head of school were appointed in September 2017 following the resignation of the previous headteacher.
- The school currently caters for pupils from Year 1 to Year 11. There are no children in the Reception Year.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan due to autistic spectrum disorder. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of low-attaining pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, many of whom are non-verbal, referred to the school since the previous inspection.
- Approximately half of all pupils receive support through the pupil premium funding, including a very small number of pupils who are looked after by their local authority.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across the school, jointly with senior leaders, to look at the impact of teaching over time on pupils' learning and progress. They heard several pupils read and observed phonics sessions.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and the school's information about the progress pupils were making over time, including the destinations of the oldest pupils.
- They held discussions with senior leaders, members of the academy trust and members of the advisory council.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and held informal discussions with different pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They also examined the 62 questionnaire responses returned by pupils.
- They looked at a range of documentation including: school improvement plans; self-evaluation documents; minutes of trustees' meetings; review outcomes by the regional adviser for Peterborough academies; records of complaints; attendance figures; and rates of exclusion.
- Inspectors examined a range of policies to promote the safety and well-being of pupils, including: the safeguarding policy; the e-safety policy; risk assessments; records of incidents, restraints and behaviour; and records of the use of the calming room.
- They also looked at the school's website to determine whether the required information was published.
- Inspectors carefully considered parents' views by looking at the responses to 32 Parent View returns in addition to 12 text responses. They also held a meeting with a group of six parents and informal discussions with 12 parents who collected their children from school.
- Inspectors looked at the responses in the 44 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sally Garrett

Ofsted Inspector

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