

Inspection of Nexus Foundation Special School

Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 8AA

Inspection dates: 11–12 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like this school because staff know them well. Adults make sure pupils are happy, well looked after and safe. Pupils feel safe in the school because they know the staff will look after them. The pupils really like the new building. They especially like the hydrotherapy pool, soft playrooms and outside play areas. Students in the sixth form particularly enjoy cooking their own lunch in the life skills house.

Pupils behave well. They know some of their friends find it hard to behave because of their disabilities. They are proud of the ways they work together to support each other. One pupil said, 'We can help each other.' Pupils know that if they are struggling to manage their behaviour, then the staff will support them. This means if they have a problem, then they are helped to start learning again as soon as possible. Most pupils say there is no bullying. A very few said that there had been a little, but teachers had resolved it.

Leaders have raised expectations and are improving the school. They want all pupils to be successful and well prepared for the future. Pupils recognise the value of attending school and want to come. Older pupils enjoy college placements and internships.

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

While the school is improving, it is still not providing a good quality of education. This is because there is more work to do to improve the curriculum. The introduction of new 'learning pathways' is a positive start because they match the pupils' needs and abilities. Despite leaders' ambitious intentions, some curriculum plans are at an early stage or lack detail. Leaders have improved attendance, behaviour, medical care and safeguarding procedures. This gives inspectors the confidence that the headteacher and his team can make the required improvements.

Teachers do plan effectively for the pupils in their classes to help them learn well. For example, pupils learn to read with accuracy, and the books they read are at the right level. Individual teachers ensure that they teach the mathematics skills relevant to their pupils. Staff help pupils to learn useful life skills. However, these are not planned coherently as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme.

Pupils with additional physical needs have well-thought-out physical development programmes. These are led by well-trained staff. Orthoses and equipment are sourced, fitted and regularly reviewed. Pupils have opportunities to change their position during the day, so they feel more comfortable to take part in lessons.

Staff care for pupils very much and communicate with them successfully as individuals. There is not yet a consistent system of non-verbal communication used across the school. Although some staff are well trained in this area, this is not the

case for everyone.

Pupils enjoy school. They say that teachers expect them to work hard, and that they always encourage them to do their best. Pupils appreciate that the school has rules. They know that the rules help keep them safe and help them learn well. Pupils behave well in class, and this allows them to get on well with their learning.

Some parents and carers who met with an inspector said that their children are happy in school. They cannot fault the education and care that the school provides for their children. One parent who responded to Ofsted's Parent View Survey said, 'My son feels happy and safe and is well looked after. All of the teachers are kind, caring and attentive.'

Leaders have improved the range of opportunities for pupils in the past year. The school now provides experiences like swimming, horse riding, fishing and shopping. Pupils really enjoy all the activities. Trips out of school have helped the pupils to remember what they have learned and successfully develop their life skills.

Governors work well with other leaders. Together, they have created a safer school, including improving how care plans support pupils.

Like elsewhere in the school, what children learn in the early years is not planned well enough. The early years staff take great care to make sure that the children are well looked after. When an inspector visited the nursery, the new nursery children had settled quickly and were happy to join in with activities. Staff took the time to really understand the children's needs in their care plans. Some children joined the Reception class from the Nursery already knowing their letter sounds. These children are not introduced to the next sounds that they need in order to learn quickly enough.

Leaders know that last year the sixth-form provision required improvement. The new sixth-form leader has a clear vision for the sixth form, but has not had time to put it in place. Students study life skills at school and in the community. Leaders work with the students to find suitable college places and work experience. They hope that these opportunities will help students to get a place, linked to their interests and needs in the future. This could be further study, training or employment when students leave school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff know their duties and responsibilities to safeguard the pupils. A comprehensive induction and training programme makes sure all staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff know the pupils well and refer any concerns they have to the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders follow up any concerns swiftly.

Leaders have worked diligently to ensure that the extra risks around pupils' medical

and special educational needs and/or disabilities are well managed through highly effective care plans.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While the school is improving, curriculum plans are not yet developed and implemented systematically across the school to help teachers plan a high-quality learning experience for the pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and usually plan appropriate learning for them. However, curriculum plans, including in mathematics and PSHE, do not set out what is taught at each stage of the school. Therefore, teachers do not know what pupils learned before they were in their class or what they will learn next.
- Some staff are very well trained, for example in the teaching of early reading or in the use of non-verbal communication techniques. Not all staff who work with pupils have had the same training. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive training so that there is a consistent method of communication throughout the school. Furthermore, some staff would benefit from further training in the teaching of early reading.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	119050
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10053591
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	196
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anna Williamson
Headteacher	Scott Jarred
Website	www.nexus.school.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2017

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has relocated to a new purpose-built site. In September 2017, when the school moved to the new site, they also changed the school's name from Ridge View to Nexus.
- Nexus Foundation School is a special school providing education for children and young people aged two to 19. It provides care and education for pupils with profound, severe and complex learning difficulties. Approximately half of the pupils also have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust (KSENT), working collaboratively with other special schools.
- The early years provision includes a nursery class.
- Many sixth-form students attend courses part time with other providers.

- The school also provides education for its pupils within All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Wouldham.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. Meetings were also held with senior and curriculum leaders.
- Reading communication, mathematics, physical development and PSHE were considered as part of the inspection.
- An inspector reviewed safeguarding procedures in place at the school, including the single central record and child protection and safeguarding policies. An inspector met with the designated leaders of safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 39 responses recorded on Ofsted's Parent View Survey, including 16 associated free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of each school day.
- The views of staff were gathered through meetings with groups of staff and by taking account of the 55 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils in lessons, in small groups after lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils; the curriculum; the school improvement adviser's evaluations; and minutes from the governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Susan Conway, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Yates	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Corbett	Ofsted Inspector

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