

Inspection of an outstanding school: Billing Brook Special School

Penistone Road, Lumbertubs, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 8EZ

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Outcome

Billing Brook Special School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Billing Brook Special School. Pupils thrive in their personal development. Staff are expert in communicating with pupils. They help pupils to develop their confidence. Staff help pupils to play together at social times.

Staff make sure that pupils are taught to follow the school motto, 'Be respectful, try your best and be safe.' Pupils behave well.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. Staff make sure that pupils gain valuable knowledge and experience of the wider world. Pupils take part in an excellent range of activities. They learn through real-life experiences, such as visits to the local supermarket or working in the school's cafe. Pupils are able to link their trips and visits to their learning in the classroom. This leads to valuable work-related learning and opportunities for future employment.

Bullying is very rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it effectively. Well-trained staff help pupils to cope with any anxieties they may have.

All pupils across the school are treated equally. Their needs are met and they achieve exceptionally well.

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

Leaders have developed an extremely effective curriculum that meets pupils' needs and ensures that they achieve well.

The school has many strengths. Plans show clear ambition and vision for the school. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils achieve their potential.

Leaders make sure that reading is very important across the school. Staff are skilled in teaching pupils to communicate. They use symbols to help pupils learn well. Pupils enjoy

reading regularly. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to teach and promote reading well. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully. They ensure that pupils learn the phonics skills they need when they begin to read. Staff help pupils who fall behind in reading to catch up.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that build on what pupils have already learned very effectively. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and work hard. Pupils' work shows that staff are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Pupils are encouraged to use their mathematical skills in cross-curricular activities. This deepens pupils' understanding.

Leaders and other staff make sure that the curriculum helps pupils to be ambitious and realistic about their futures. Younger pupils, for example, enjoyed the opportunity to deliver letters using the school's own post office. Pupils' learning is linked to the wider community and is relevant to pupils' needs and interests. This work starts early and, by the time pupils leave the school, they are prepared to move on to the next stage of their lives. Disadvantaged pupils' needs are met well. Leaders' careful and considered planning helps disadvantaged pupils achieve well.

Staff make sure that children are safe and happy in the early years. Children get off to a flying start. Teachers provide an exciting curriculum which helps children to explore the world around them. Children learn to recognise words through symbols and enjoy the storytelling lessons. Teachers encourage children to explore and be as independent as possible. Children particularly enjoy the well-planned outdoor opportunities. For example, some children used pumps to move water around the playground through a series of tubes.

Staff promote pupils' personal development exceptionally well through a variety of additional activities and opportunities. For example, pupils enjoyed a harvest festival celebration with their immediate community. This is one of a number of events that pupils value greatly. Leaders ensure that the school has increasingly strong links with local businesses. Leaders ensure that pupils understand and experience life beyond the school gates and in the wider community.

Leaders have high expectations of sixth-form students. The curriculum meets sixth-form students' needs very well. Leaders have developed strong links with local employers. There are lots of opportunities for students to meet employers and experience the world of work. Students take part in internships. These opportunities help students get ready for employment. Sixth-form students enjoy a wide range of activities that teach them how to become valuable members of the local community.

Leaders have built positive relationships with staff and are well aware of the workload pressures that exist. They continue to take positive steps to reduce unnecessary workload.

Governors are knowledgeable and understand their role in the school. Governors challenge and support leaders appropriately. The close working of leaders and the governing body has brought about improvements across the school, including to the sixth

form.

Parents and carers appreciate the approachable staff and the way in which the curriculum is planned to meet pupils' needs. Parents are kept well informed about the next steps of their child's learning. They say that their child is kept safe. Parents are very happy with the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders make sure that all safeguarding checks are carried out efficiently and in a timely manner. Staff are trained well and kept up to date with the latest information about how to keep pupils safe. Staff demonstrate good awareness of safeguarding around the school. All staff are vigilant about keeping pupils safe, including when pupils are online. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding on 17 June 2015.

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 are 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	140436
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10087302
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Academy special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	27
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Mr Matthew Lister
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Grant
Website	www.billingbrook.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school has expanded significantly since the last inspection, in 2015, to provide additional places for pupils with communication and interaction needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior staff and the school's professional partner. Meetings were also held with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered three subjects in detail: reading, mathematics and preparation for adulthood. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with senior leaders and subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work and met with pupils to discuss their experience of learning. The inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding. Staff explained to inspectors how they kept children safe.
- The inspectors observed pupils during social times, at lunchtime and at breaktime.

- One inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of the 32 responses Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, as well as the 51 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jason Brooks, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

John Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

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