

Inspection of a good school: Fred Nicholson School

Westfield Road, Toftwood, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1JB

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Outcome

Fred Nicholson School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to Fred Nicholson School. One pupil's response typified the views of others, saying, 'All the staff help you and cheer you up if you are sad.' Pupils feel safe at the school. They trust the adults who help them. They are comfortable talking to adults if they are worried or upset. Some parents and carers said they had seen big changes for the better in their child since joining the school.

Pupils behave well and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils mostly understand what bullying is. They said that it does not happen very often at the school. Staff deal properly with any incidents that do happen.

Pupils talked about all the different events that they enjoy at the school. They talked about when birds of prey were brought to the school and when they learned about the planets from experts.

Staff want the very best for each pupil. They work together well as a team. Staff treat each pupil with respect from the moment they are individually greeted at the start of each day. Staff carefully consider pupils' needs and interests when planning lessons and activities.

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

Leaders know what they want pupils to learn as they move through the school. They make sure that pupils joining the school are ready to learn. This is particularly important because many pupils have not had good experiences of school before joining Fred Nicholson School.

Leaders carefully plan out the content of each subject so that pupils use what they already know to learn new things. In computing, for example, pupils learn about basic hands-on programming of toys. They then use their knowledge when learning how to program on a computer. Leaders make sure that pupils come back to important

knowledge like times tables, often to help them remember what they have learned. Most teachers understand well what they are teaching. In music, pupils learn to appreciate music. There are lots of opportunities to learn an instrument and to sing. Teachers in key stage 3 know what they want pupils to learn in English and mathematics. They link together work in tutor time to learning in lessons.

In a minority of classes, teachers do not make sure that they teach the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. In computing, for example, some teachers do not fully understand how the curriculum fits together. Some teachers have not had enough training in mathematics so they do not know how best to teach some parts of the mathematics curriculum.

Pupils enjoy reading and every class has a reading area with books which are at the right levels for the pupils. Teachers read regularly to pupils and talk about stories. Some do not spend enough time directly teaching reading skills to pupils who are ready for this learning.

Staff teach pupils about the wider world. Pupils in key stage 4 learn about parental responsibility in 'real babies' week. Pupils enjoy the forest school, where they use tools and learn about personal safety. Pupils enjoy lunchtime clubs such as choir, dance and dodgeball. Pupils go on residential trips which help them develop their social skills, confidence and independence.

A key strength of the school is how well staff know and provide for the individual needs of each pupil. This includes pupils' health and medical needs, as well as their emotional needs. Staff work closely with parents to help them support their children at home.

Leaders model the behaviour they expect from all staff, and staff replicate this. They speak to pupils sensitively and calmly, even when pupils are in crisis. Leaders make sure that staff are well trained to deal with difficult situations. When pupils have difficulties, they are well managed by staff and so do not disturb the learning of others.

Leaders are conscious of the workload demands on staff. They check on staff well-being and act on the feedback they receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know that many of the pupils at the school are highly vulnerable. Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained. Staff know the signs that may mean a pupil is at risk of harm and what to do if they have concerns. Leaders act on these concerns, involving outside agencies when needed. Leaders make sure that staff know how to move pupils safely and with respect for pupils' privacy. This includes those pupils with medical needs and those who are in crisis. Pupils learn about personal safety. They talked about 'safe hugs'. They know what information they should not share online and why. They know what to do if they encounter cyber bullying.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff have the secure understanding of the content of the curriculum that leaders demonstrate. Some teachers do not give enough emphasis to the components within subjects that pupils need to learn before moving on to new learning. Leaders need to provide training to ensure that all staff understand how each subject is planned and how to cover the key elements of learning when teaching through topics.
- Some teachers do not teach the specific reading skills pupils need at the point when pupils are ready for this. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are able to identify when individual pupils need more direct teaching of reading skills.
- Subject leaders have not had enough opportunities to share their subject knowledge with staff. They need to be given time to check how effectively the curriculum for their subject is being implemented so that they can better support staff.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good in December 2014.

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	121256
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10054447
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Hilary Bradshaw
Headteacher	Jane Hayman
Website	www.frednicholson.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2014

Information about this school

- The school is a special school catering for pupils with learning difficulties and a wide range of associated complex needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has a 19-place resource provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- Pupils are grouped mainly by key stage and, within each key stage, by need. Consequently, each class includes pupils from a range of year groups.
- The school provides boarding provision for up to 26 pupils. This was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and two members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke with some teaching assistants and some class teachers. Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils about the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' records and files relating to safeguarding, looked at records of staff recruitment and looked at records of training relating to safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised a range of other school documents, including the school's self-

evaluation and the school improvement plan.

- Inspectors considered the school's work in English, mathematics, computing and music in detail. They visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils from the lessons they visited and looked at pupils' work. The lead inspector read with pupils from key stages 2 and 3.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Maria Curry, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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