

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Grove Special School

Grove Gardens, Tweedmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2EN

Inspection dates:

3–4 December 2019

Outcome

The Grove Special School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' development, well-being and happiness are at the centre of everything that happens at The Grove Special School. Teachers know the needs of each individual pupil. They know what each pupil can do. They aim high for each pupil, no matter how significant their needs might be.

Each pupil has an individual timetable that supports them with their specific needs. For example, some pupils with physical disabilities spend time in the hydrotherapy pool. Others spend time learning about the world around them through light therapy. Others are taught to read, write and count if they are able to. Teachers are experts at matching what happens in classrooms to the needs of individuals.

Staff listen intently to pupils. They learn how individual pupils communicate so that they can hear their opinions and feelings. Staff are tender and patient. They find ways to understand pupils. They unlock pupils' potential.

Pupils feel safe at school. Teachers help them to make friends with each other. There is no bullying or unkind behaviour. The school is one big family that is based on respect. Staff work hard with parents and outside agencies to make sure that pupils have plans for when they leave school. One parent's comment echoed the views of many, when they said that 'the school has prepared my son for an independence I never thought possible'.

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

One of the keys to the success of this school is the way in which teachers set targets for pupils. Teachers make sure that they fully understand the information that is in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. They then write targets for pupils based on their needs and their abilities. Teachers use all of this information to plan activities in lessons that help pupils to build on their skills and knowledge. The system works well. Teachers' planning ensures that pupils' individual needs are met.

There are two separate systems for setting targets. Targets for pupils with the most

complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are written by teaching staff and health professionals. For example, for some pupils an occupational therapist or physiotherapist will make sure that pupils' physical development has a clear focus. In this way, targets meet the specific needs that pupils have. Some pupils with moderate or severe SEND study different subjects similar to those in the national curriculum. Teachers' planning is equally effective for these pupils.

Teachers know that pupils need to repeat activities again and again before their understanding develops. They know that many pupils make tiny steps in their learning. Teachers make sure that the basics are covered before they move on.

Developing pupils' ability to communicate is at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders use specialist boards and computers to help pupils to express their feelings and to make choices. One teacher works with a class of pupils with specific speech and language difficulties. Here, the atmosphere is especially supportive. Pupils often begin to communicate verbally, supported by staff and other prompts. All members of staff are trained to communicate with pupils in different ways. They use Makaton, picture prompts or technology, for example.

Reading has a high priority. Pupils with complex needs focus on what a book is for and what a story is. Nursery rhymes are used to help pupils to listen to rhythms of speech. This is successful. Pupils who are able learn to read. Teachers make sure that they develop their knowledge and understanding of sounds and letters well.

Staff at school know how to help pupils with a wide range of additional needs. They help the special educational needs coordinator to identify any additional needs that pupils develop. Staff then help pupils to overcome these. This includes children in early years. Here, staff work well with families and health professionals to help children as they start school. They make sure that their additional needs are identified and met.

There is a focus on personal, social and health education (PSHE) at school. Pupils learn about how to stay healthy and how to be as independent as possible. This includes, where appropriate, travel training, money management and how to cook for themselves. Staff plan well for pupils' next steps after school. This includes students in the sixth form. Students, families and other professionals are involved in the process. Some students move to college. Others move to social care settings. For many years now, all pupils and sixth-form students have moved on successfully from school.

Leaders make sure that pupils have valuable life experiences at school. Pupils often go into the local community and visit parks and beaches. Pupils do their bit in helping to protect the environment. They enjoy cultural visits and sports, including boccia. Leaders make sure that pupils' additional needs are not barriers to enjoying the world around them. For example, a specially adapted chair was used for pupils so that they could be pulled through the sea by a pony, splashing as they went. Pupils are given the opportunity to enjoy their childhood.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Respect and care run throughout the school like a rod of iron. There is a clear culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained in this area and receive regular updates to keep them well informed. They know what to do if they have any concerns about individual pupils.

Staff are aware of the additional physical and emotional needs of pupils. Staff are sensitive when it comes to intimate needs, such as toileting. They help pupils to move safely around the building. Governors play an active role in making sure that policies and procedures are effective.

Background

When we have judged a special school, pupil referral unit or maintained nursery 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 14–15 July 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'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	122385
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10119941
Type of school	Special
School category	Community 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	46
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Curry
Headteacher	Penelope Derries
Website	www.thegrove.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 July 2015

Information about this school

- This is a special school for pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. We talked to curriculum leaders. We met members of the governing body, including the chair. We had a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner.
- We looked in detail at reading and communication, mathematics, computing and PSHE. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We spoke to some pupils about their learning, including students in the sixth form. We looked at pupils'

work. We looked at what children in the early years can do and we looked at students' work in the sixth form.

- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; information about how pupils' behaviour is managed; and risk assessments for pupils who are the most vulnerable. We talked to some pupils during the inspection and asked them about how safe they feel.
- We took into account the 18 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and the 22 responses to the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Banks

Ofsted Inspector

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