

Inspection of Fox Wood Special School

Holes Lane, Woolston, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 4LS

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The pupils at Fox Wood Special School are happy, safe and well cared for. They are supported by highly trained staff. Pupils benefit from an effective curriculum that responds well to their complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils achieve well.

Staff encourage pupils to 'shine'. They have high expectations of pupils. Staff always expect pupils to attempt new, more demanding things. Pupils enjoy using the 'Green Mile' or the 'Sensory Kingdom' to improve their strength and well-being.

Pupils successfully learn how to get along with each other. Differences are celebrated. Adults skilfully help pupils to manage and express their opinions and wishes.

Staff make effective use of routines and calming techniques to help pupils behave well. Adults sort any worries that pupils have, including bullying.

Pupils benefit from appropriate levels of supervision at breaktimes. Staff support pupils to play. They intervene quickly to help pupils to interact safely.

Pupils build up confidence in communicating with others. Staff enable pupils to develop their strengths and interests. This helps pupils decide what they would like to do when they are older. By the time they are in the sixth form, students prepare meals in the 'Bungalow'. Students take part in volunteering or work experience.

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

Most pupils at Fox Wood Special School have profound SEND. Leaders provide a curriculum that is carefully tailored to meet these pupils' individual learning needs. Leaders' curriculum plans set out clear, ambitious steps in learning, in a logical order. Teachers successfully use these plans to educate pupils from the early years to the school's sixth form, 'Woolston College'.

The clarity of leaders' curriculum plans helps teachers to develop suitable learning activities for each individual pupil. Careful curriculum planning supports children and pupils to progress well across the curriculum. Pupils develop a secure understanding of their own strengths and interests as they progress through their own curriculum 'pathway'. By the time they are ready to move into the school's sixth-form college, pupils can make their own decisions about what they want to study there. Students in the sixth form achieve well.

Across the school, teachers skilfully check what pupils already know and can do. They use leaders' plans effectively to decide what pupils need to learn next. A range of adults, in addition to class teachers, support pupils' learning in each class. However, sometimes teachers do not ensure that everyone involved in this support

is totally clear about the specific role that they have in helping individual pupils to learn.

Pupils are happy to be in school, or in the school's sixth-form college, with their friends. Most pupils respond well to the established routines that staff use to help them to learn and behave well. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to provide individualised care plans. Leaders are also successful in identifying any further additional needs that pupils may have. Pupils benefit from the support of medical and therapeutic staff on site. This means that they do not need to miss time at school unnecessarily. Even so, some pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to engage with others. Staff find the most effective way of communicating with each pupil. This enables pupils to develop confidence and independence. For example, in the early years, children start to develop their ability to focus and listen to a range of sounds. Staff make effective use of well thought-out, individual learning programmes in the early years. Through these, staff enable pupils to communicate well through speech, symbols or written text.

Once pupils have learned to recognise and recreate sounds, they follow the school's well-planned phonics programme to begin to learn to read. All staff receive regular training in the teaching of phonics. Pupils successfully continue to build up their phonics knowledge as they progress through the school and the sixth-form college. Pupils practise using books that are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. They use their reading knowledge well to access other areas of the curriculum. Pupils said that they enjoy reading with Foxy, the school's mascot, in the school library.

Leaders successfully prioritise pupils' wider development, including in the sixth form. This well-planned aspect of learning increases pupils' knowledge of the wider world. It appropriately supports them to pursue future career pathways.

Pupils take part in campaigns for electing school councillors. They learn about, and reflect on, different faiths and cultures. Pupils take part in activities that contribute well to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Pupils enjoyed the activities that leaders provided prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as 'eco club' or using the local swimming pool for lessons. The high-quality opportunities that leaders provide, including in the sixth form, enhance pupils' abilities to make informed choices about what they want to do in their leisure time.

Leaders work closely with governors to ensure that pupils' learning is enhanced by suitable resources. Parents said that leaders and other staff listen to them. Most parents felt that leaders resolve any concerns quickly and effectively. Governors challenge leaders about the quality of education and their individual areas of responsibility to great effect. They successfully hold leaders to account. Governors have kept a close eye on staff's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe. Staff are vigilant about signs of potential safeguarding risks. They record and pass on their concerns diligently. Leaders make sure that pupils get any additional support that they need to stay safe.

Leaders make sure that staff know how to support pupils who need significant personal, medical or therapeutic support. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including those with the most complex SEND, can communicate their needs. Pupils benefit from expert support on site.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They learn about developing healthy relationships, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, teachers do not make sure that all support staff are clear about their role in supporting pupils with their learning. This means that some pupils do not build up their knowledge as well as they could. Leaders need to make sure that all teaching staff help pupils to secure new learning by making the most effective use of support staff.
- Many pupils in the school have significant physical disabilities and/or medical conditions. As a result of these, they have missed large chunks of time when they should have been in school. This limits their ability to achieve well. Leaders need to continue the work they have done so far to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly where possible.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 the school and 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	111496
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	10200827
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Trish Chapman
Headteacher	Lucinda Duffy
Website	www.foxwoodschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 11 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority and a consultant commissioned by leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the school central record of staff and visitors; staff's training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, physical education and personal, social, health and economics education. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. They also discussed learning in other subjects, such as art and design, history and geography. In addition, inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school. They also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online parent questionnaire, and the free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Holmes

Ofsted Inspector

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