

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Kingsley Special Academy

Churchill Way, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 5DP

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Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2021

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this section 8 inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a school where all pupils are welcomed and valued, regardless of their needs. Everyone works together to enact the school's vision: 'Helping people living in extraordinary circumstances to live ordinary lives'. There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for their next steps, and for adulthood.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe, and one said that this is because 'the staff are kind, and they love us'. Parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Some spoke about the marked progress their children have made. Others praised the good home-school communications and the sense that staff care for the whole family. All said that their children are happy.

Pupils spoke positively about their lessons, which they described as 'fun activities'. Pupils across the school are keen learners. They respond eagerly to adults' high expectations for behaviour. They treat each other, and adults, with respect.

Leaders have designed the facilities and equipment to promote pupils' development and support them with their physical, social and emotional needs. For example, skilled staff provide regular sessions in the popular hydrotherapy pool and soft-play sensory area. Pupils make good use of the attractive outdoor spaces at breaktimes. Trained professionals, such as a clinical psychologist and occupational therapist, are on hand to advise staff and work directly with pupils.

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

Leaders, staff and governors share a united, ambitious vision for the school and its pupils. There is a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' individual needs and circumstances. These principles underpin the school's curriculum. The Kingsley curriculum design consists of four 'houses'. These reflect key aspects of pupils' development, such as their academic,

social and emotional, and sensory needs. Some pupils follow aspects of the national curriculum subjects, according to their needs. There is also a strong focus on the specific barriers to learning stated in pupils' education, health and care plans.

Leaders have embedded the curriculum over time. Staff have ensured that they plan lessons and activities that cater for pupils' wide-ranging needs. However, leaders recognise that certain aspects of the curriculum need more development. This is partly due to staff turnover and partly due to the impact of COVID-19 on the pace of improvement. Some curriculum leaders are new to their roles. Some curriculum plans do not set out the exact knowledge and skills pupils should gain, and when. This only applies to national curriculum subjects. All other aspects of the curriculum, such as the social and emotional curriculum and the provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, remain very strong.

In mathematics, curriculum plans lack detail. Leaders rely on teachers choosing activities based on pupils' interests alone. This means that leaders do not have an accurate overview of the subject. They cannot be sure if the curriculum content is covered or taught in the correct order, so that pupils are able to know and remember more over time.

Leaders are in the process of reviewing the reading curriculum. Inspectors found signs that this is having a positive impact on pupils' love of reading and positive attitudes to books. The new school library is an exciting area where pupils explore a wide range of books. Staff use a range of approaches to teach reading. Some pupils use communication devices to help them learn about words and sounds. Others learn to read by means of phonics. However, leaders have not ensured that staff use a single, consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. There are too many different schemes in use. This means that pupils do not become confident readers as quickly as they might.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' development very well. The school's values have been written in child-friendly terms so that they can be easily understood by all. These values include making decisions together, following rules and caring for others. It is clear from pupils' respectful attitudes that they understand and follow the school's values. When it is safe to do so, pupils can access a range of activities such as 'camp Kingsley', after-school clubs and holiday playschemes. These activities help them to develop as well-rounded individuals.

Governors are dedicated to the school. They are well informed about all aspects of its work. Governors are conscious of the leaders' and staff's workload and well-being. Staff told inspectors that they value working in teams to reduce workload. They willingly accept a 'purposeful workload' that directly benefits pupils.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that curriculum leadership and the teaching of phonics may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

In view of pupils' vulnerabilities, there is a large safeguarding team. Member of this team have clearly defined roles. They work together effectively to ensure that policies and procedures are stringent. Records show that staff report concerns immediately, however minor. Leaders respond straight away to concerns, and take the appropriate actions to ensure that pupils are safe. Members of the family support team liaise with families. They understand the pressures that families face and work with them to secure pupils' attendance and punctuality. Pupils, staff and parents agreed that pupils' safety and well-being are a high priority at the school.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the national curriculum subjects, including mathematics, the plans for learning do not specify in enough detail what pupils should know and be able to do, and when. Consequently, curriculum leaders do not have an accurate overview of their subjects. This limits their ability to check that pupils know and remember more over time. Leaders should ensure that they set out the precise knowledge and skills pupils should acquire, in all national curriculum areas, as effectively as in other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The approach to the teaching of phonics is currently too fragmented. Leaders have not provided a consistent, systematic approach for staff to follow. Pupils who learn to read by means of phonics do not consistently apply their knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. Leaders should ensure that they consolidate the teaching of phonics to adopt a consistent approach that enables pupils to develop as increasingly fluent, confident readers.

## Background

When we have judged 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Kingsley School, to be outstanding in September 2011.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137875
<b>Local authority</b>	North Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199906
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	155
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Robert Quincey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tom O'Dwyer
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.kingsley.school">www.kingsley.school</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Kingsley Learning Foundation multi-academy trust in October 2018, along with one other school, Red Kite Academy. At that time there was a significant turnover of staff, as 15 teachers from Kingsley joined Red Kite Academy to assist in its formation. The headteacher acts as chief executive officer for the multi-academy trust.
- Since the last inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly, due to parental demand.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, curriculum leaders and a range of staff. The lead inspector met with a group of governors and the education development officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these curriculum areas: early reading; mathematics; and the provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. For each

deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- An inspector also looked at curriculum plans, spoke to leaders and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks and holding discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clive Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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