

Inspection of The Springfields Academy

Curzon Street, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 0DS

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and staff understand these needs extremely well. Staff also understand how these needs relate to each unique pupil's interests and ambitions. As a result, pupils are successfully helped to attain the school's stated goal of living 'safe and independent lives'. Pupils are happy at the school and attend well. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the educational curriculum that pupils follow that are not rigorous enough.

Pupils behave well, and staff know how to help them to do this. The number of occasions where pupils are held has reduced significantly over time. The school has clear systems to enable pupils to raise concerns about bullying. Pupils say that staff usually deal with any bullying well but that, on occasions, staff do not always get to the root of the problem.

Pupils experience a wide range of therapy appropriate to their needs. Therapy is threaded through pupils' timetables and is seen as integral to their educational success. For example, the use of animal therapy has led to an increased interest from pupils in following an animal care curriculum pathway. Leaders have listened and made this happen.

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

Leaders, governors and trustees have a clear, shared vision of securing positive outcomes for all pupils. Staff share this moral purpose. They know their pupils extremely well and use this knowledge to think carefully about each pupil's individual curriculum. Where the curriculum is working well, there is a clear link between what leaders want pupils to learn, how this knowledge will be taught and how pupils' learning is assessed. As a result, pupils learn well, deepening their knowledge over time. This can be seen in the mathematics and science curriculums.

In some areas of the curriculum, while a lot of thought has gone into how knowledge will be taught, similar attention has not been given to precisely what will be taught. This can also mean that teaching activities are not well chosen. Therefore, pupils do not deepen their knowledge over time. This is the case, for example, in some aspects of the school's programme of learning outside the classroom.

Leaders rightly place a strong emphasis on ensuring all pupils learn to read well. For those pupils who need it, a phonics programme is in place. This is supplemented by speech and language therapy where appropriate. Pupils read every day. Teachers tackle some pupils' reluctance to engage with the written word skilfully. The priority given to reading is shared by all staff. This includes the support staff, many of whom listen to children read as part of the reading programme. However, leaders know that there are some inconsistencies in the implementation of the phonics programme and are taking steps to address these.

Leaders have developed an effective careers programme. They use work experience well, within the limits set by the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtually all pupils go on to sustained education, employment or training. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Leaders, governors and trustees have successfully managed a significant transition in the school's provision. In the past, the pupils' most common area of need was social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The vast majority of pupils now have communication and interaction needs, including a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). At the same time, leaders have brought about a change of culture in the way pupils' behaviour is managed. This has led to a significant reduction in the need to hold pupils.

Local governors have a clear understanding of their role. They see themselves as 'the eyes and ears of the trust on the ground'. Trustees have well-established procedures to secure accountability across all levels of leadership. Leaders, trustees and governors know the school's provision well, but there is a tendency to be over-optimistic about the quality of the education it provides.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a secure culture of safeguarding. Staff have a well-developed understanding of safeguarding in a school where virtually all pupils have ASD. They are keenly aware of the particular risks faced by pupils with ASD, such as vulnerability to grooming or radicalisation, especially when online. The required pre-employment checks for prospective staff are recorded efficiently. In a couple of areas, such as reference verification and the recording of manual holds, record-keeping could be sharper, but this does not undermine the effective safeguarding culture that is clearly present in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas, rigour and clarity of curriculum thinking are not as evident as they are in others. This can mean that teaching is not based securely enough on what pupils need to know and remember in the long term and how this builds on an accurate assessment of their needs. It can also lead to teaching activities that are not appropriate for the intended curriculum outcome. In these parts of the curriculum, leaders must ensure that they are clear about what they want pupils to learn over time and that teaching activities support the achievement of these curriculum goals.

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	145198
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10212328
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	1
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marcus Agius
Headteacher	Mike Thomas
Website	www.springfields.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Reach South Academy Trust in November 2017. The predecessor school was graded requires improvement.
- The school operates from two sites. The second site, Springfields South, is in Salisbury and was opened in 2019.
- The school has one pupil in its post-16 provision.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and three unregistered ones.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the residential provision.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, phase leaders, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, governors and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: communication and language (including reading), mathematics, physical education and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects, such as science and computer science.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding records and discussed safeguarding with leaders and other staff.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. They also looked at the results of the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

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