

Inspection of an outstanding school: Watergate School

Lushington Road, Bellingham, London SE6 3WG

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 March 2022

Outcome

Watergate School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are eager to get to lessons as soon as the school day starts. Lessons are interesting, with resources that pupils like. Pupils feel safe and happy. They like the adults who work with them.

Behaviour at the school is exemplary. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school. They greet visitors with interest and are polite. Sometimes pupils need support to manage how they are feeling, and they get better at this as they get older. Parents and carers agree that bullying is rare. When parents do have concerns, the school listens and responds without delay.

Many pupils at the school need extra help to maintain and develop their physical skills. The curriculum includes activities to support mobility and physical well-being. Parents have a say in what their child works on.

Over time, pupils become more independent and learn to communicate more. For many pupils, this is an amazing achievement, because of their very complex needs.

Leaders and school staff have very high expectations for all pupils. The curriculum helps pupils work on what is most important for them and their families. Pupils are very well prepared for the move to secondary school.

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

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is an ambitious and well-designed curriculum. Planned sequences of lessons help pupils to work on personalised goals. Teachers use interesting and imaginative resources to bring lessons to life. Staff know pupils very well and have extensive subject knowledge in the areas they teach. They also have an expert understanding of pupils' needs.

Leaders' approach to assessment is very effective. It is clear about what pupils can already do and what they need to do next to improve. Pupil targets are relevant and unique to each pupil, and parents have a say about priorities.

Leaders place a high priority on continuous training, support and development of staff. Staff new to the school feel very well supported. All staff feel that leaders listen and are approachable. Staff are proud to work at the school. They reflect on what they do and support each other to teach well.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive. This is a strength of the school. Staff work hard across the school to understand what engages and motivates every pupil. As a result, pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Disruption in lessons is rare. Sometimes pupils need help and understanding to regulate their behaviour. This is usually when pupils first join the school and are getting used to the new environment. Often, pupils have not had a positive start to their education in other settings.

The vast majority of parents are very happy with the school. They can see the progress their child is making and they feel their child is safe and happy at the school.

Pupils learn how to develop their communication and thinking skills in lessons. Pupils also engage with stories and books through multi-sensory approaches. The school curriculum also meets the needs of the small number of pupils who are ready to learn and remember text. Mathematical thinking is developed through all areas of learning.

There is a very broad range of activities at the school which promote pupils' wider development. For example, pupils watch and take part in multi-sensory performances. Visiting musicians, dancers and artists enrich the school's curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to participate in Lewisham's London Borough of Culture activities. Pupils take part in accessible sports, such as wheelchair rugby and basketball.

During their time at the school, pupils develop their independence. For example, pupils learn to find their way around the school and make choices about the tasks they are doing. Leaders and school staff understand that communication is essential to independence. School staff allow time for pupils to respond and to show what they can achieve on their own.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. All staff are vigilant and know how to recognise the signs that a pupil might be at risk. They report concerns as soon as they notice them.

Many pupils at the school are developing their communication skills. Staff understand that this may make them more vulnerable.

Leaders and staff work well with other agencies to make sure that pupils get extra help when they need it. There are thorough checks on all staff working at the school. Leaders and governors set very high expectations for staff conduct.

Background

When we have judged a 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 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 school to be outstanding in March 2012.

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	100766
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10212457
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Hamilton
Headteacher	Linda Matthews
Website	www.watergate.lewisham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has an additional site, which is co-located with the Ladywell Children’s Centre in Lewisham.
- All pupils at the school have education, health and care plans. The school meets the needs of pupils with cognition and learning needs. Some pupils also have communication and interaction needs.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection 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.
- Inspectors met with: representatives of the governing body, including the chair and the safeguarding governor; the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers and the assistant headteacher; the local authority lead officer for special educational needs and/or disabilities; and the local authority commissioned school improvement adviser.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. 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 evidence of pupils' achievements.
- When evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's systems, safeguarding records, relevant policies and procedures and spoke to a sample of pupils, staff and parents. Inspectors spoke to the chair of governors, the safeguarding governor and designated leads for safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and to the online surveys of the views of staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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