

Inspection of Springwell Special Academy

St Helen's Boulevard, Carlton Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S71 2AY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. This puts pupils at ease and helps to create a calm and supportive environment for learning. Staff know pupils well and are sensitive to their individual needs, for example, recognising when a pupil isn't comfortable sharing their work with others until it is finished.

The pastoral team, along with staff based in each classroom, provide a team of support around each individual. Pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs mean they sometimes find it difficult to manage their emotions. This stalls the learning for individuals at times. However, staff make use of de-escalation techniques to minimise any disruption to other pupils. Staff support pupils to make amends as needed and quickly get back to work.

Leaders have made sure pupils study a broad curriculum, which is responsive to any issues pupils are facing. This helps pupils to feel safe and be well equipped to meet challenges and manage risks they may encounter. For example, if pupils are concerned about bullying, they are confident to speak to a trusted member of staff. They know staff will listen to them and support them.

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

Many staff and leaders are new to post. New leaders have reviewed the curriculum and pupils' wider educational experience and have a clear vision about their ambition for pupils. For example, leaders are determined that all pupils will meet their education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets and will work towards GCSEs in English and mathematics.

Leaders know the importance of making sure all pupils learn to read, so they can access the full curriculum. They have introduced a new programme to teach phonics in key stage 1. However, there has been limited training for staff and leaders so far. This is affecting how effectively the new programme is being implemented. In phonics lessons, pupils do not get enough practise to enable them to learn to read as soon as they should. This also affects how well they learn the basics in writing, such as letter formation and the use of phonics for spelling. Support for older, struggling readers is not always provided, despite this being a priority for some pupils.

In other subjects, leaders have introduced published schemes or have reconsidered their existing curriculum plans. New and adapted plans are resulting in greater consistency and continuity in the way the curriculum is being implemented across the school. Revisions to the curriculum have sharpened the focus on developing the subject-specific knowledge needed across the range of subjects studied. Teachers use their knowledge of individuals and the resources available to adapt their teaching. They provide support which meets pupils' individual needs and address any gaps in learning. In lessons, staff help pupils to build on their prior learning. They check pupils have remembered important knowledge that will be required for their next steps in learning.

Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) oversee the process for reviewing pupils' EHC plan targets and checking the effectiveness of the provision in place to meet pupils' special educational needs. They work closely with leaders, staff and external agencies to make sure pupils' needs are accurately identified and supported.

The wider curriculum, beyond academic subjects, is tailored to meet the needs of pupils at this school. Personal, social and health education is interweaved through many aspects of school life. However, opportunities such as after-school clubs have been reduced as a result of the pandemic. Careers information, education and guidance meets the requirements of the Baker clause. A range of pathways help pupils understand what they need to move on to their identified next steps.

Leaders have put effective systems in place to encourage good attendance and reduce persistent absence. Attendance had begun to improve before the pandemic. Absence is currently high, but actions taken are having a positive impact.

The use of part-time timetables has changed and been reduced since the last inspection. Their use is reviewed for each individual, so that adjustments can be made and pupils can get back to full time face-to-face education as quickly as possible.

There are well developed systems for governance. Governors are aware of the challenges facing the school, such as recruitment and retention, and the impact of COVID-19 on pupils. Governors are responding to these concerns. For example, a recruitment strategy group has been formed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A new team of leaders has been proactive in prioritising the ongoing development of safeguarding processes. They regularly review systems and procedures. An external review has also helped them to check the effectiveness of arrangements. By keeping a close eye on any issues emerging, leaders have made some necessary adaptations to training and the curriculum. Frequent training for staff is responsive to the context of the school, the local area and reported concerns. This has kept staff well informed and confident to identify and act on their concerns, so that pupils get the timely support they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to teaching phonics. Training has not been sufficient to give staff the expertise they need to teach reading well. Older pupils who have already fallen behind with reading and urgently need to catch up are not receiving enough, if any, support. Leaders need to prioritise staff training in phonics for leaders and staff. Leaders should check that phonics is delivered with

rigour and consistency. They should make sure all pupils receive enough practise, both in lessons, and through additional intervention as necessary, to ensure pupils quickly become fluent readers.

- Absence and persistent absence are high. Pupils, therefore, do not benefit as well as they should from their education. Leaders should continue to take action to reduce absence and persistent absence as quickly as 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	141563
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10200661
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hearl Lenton
Headteacher	Lydia Harrison
Website	www.springwelllearningcommunity.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Springwell Special Academy caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school operates on one main site with two additional satellite sites which are based within mainstream secondary schools: Holy Trinity Catholic and Church of England School, Carlton Road, Barnsley S71 2LF; and Kirk Balk Academy, West Street, Hoyland, Barnsley, S74 9HX.
- There have been significant leadership and staffing changes since the last inspection.

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.
- Inspectors discussed the work of the school with a wide range of senior leaders including the executive principal, headteacher, two SENCOs and those responsible

for safeguarding and behaviour. Meetings also took place with three governors, the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. 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. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read. Visits to lessons taking place at the satellite sites were also made.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum for pupils' personal development. Inspectors carried out both formal and informal discussions with pupils and staff. Responses to Ofsted's parent and staff surveys were also considered.
- Inspectors examined information about pupils' attendance, behaviour, safeguarding.
- Inspectors explored the effectiveness of support provided for a sample of pupils by checking against their EHC plans.

Inspection team

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