

Inspection of a good school: Churchill Park Complex Needs School

Winston Churchill Drive, Fairstead, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 4RP

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 July 2022

Outcome

Churchill Park Complex Needs School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Churchill Park is a lively and happy community. Staff go to great lengths to get to know their pupils well. Relationships across the school are positive and purposeful. New pupils are helped to settle in quickly. Supporting pupils to communicate their thoughts and feelings is an important aspect of day-to-day life. Pupils learn how to do this in different ways, including using pictures, signs, sounds and specially designed electronic devices. They trust school staff because pupils are confident that staff want the best for them. Children in the early years, pupils and students know that there is always a smile and a friendly face to turn to if something does not feel right.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe in different situations and the importance of being kind. They know that staff will step in if anyone is unkind. Activities such as cooking, growing vegetables, playing dodgeball, swimming, archery and canoeing receive a popular 'thumbs-up'. Some pupils take on responsibilities such as making bus arrival announcements at the end of the day. The strong focus on communication and personal development helps to prepare pupils well for their next steps in education and adult life. However, a few pupils do not attend school as often as they should.

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

Leaders are ambitious for Churchill Park pupils to be the best that they can be. They have thought carefully about the most important knowledge and skills that pupils and students need to know to move them on in their learning.

At the heart of the school's approach is ensuring that pupils develop their speech, language and communication skills. Staff know that securing pupils' ability to communicate is the key to unlocking wider learning, progression to the next stage of education and adult life.

Programmes tailored to individual learning needs allow pupils to increase their independence, as well as empowering them to share their views. Within their range of

abilities, they have opportunities to gain awards, including in mathematics, English, vocational learning and life skills.

Establishing pupils' love of books is a leadership priority. Sensory stories are used well to develop children's and older pupils' interest and attention. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are delighted by the opportunity to 'wiggle and giggle' with their toes in water as they listen to a seaside story and hear sounds of the sea.

When they are ready, pupils are taught to match letters to sounds. Regular practice helps them to build confidence in decoding unfamiliar words and reading to a familiar adult. Leaders have recently made changes to the way reading is taught, using phonics. These changes are still being implemented. There is a greater focus on helping pupils to remember what they have previously learned. While most pupils achieve well from different starting points, it is too early to evaluate the full impact of this work.

Staff check pupils' learning carefully when they join the school and then routinely through the year. Staff plan appropriate interventions for pupils who need extra help to catch up, or for those who need more time and encouragement to stimulate their interest in learning.

Adults skilfully promote pupils' positive behaviour in lessons and around the school. They use a range of well-practised and consistently applied techniques, including body language, visual prompts and signing the words they are speaking. Over time, pupils increase their ability to regulate their own behaviour. The school environment is generally calm and orderly. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a few do not attend as often as they should. Securing a consistently high level of attendance for all pupils is an ongoing leadership priority.

In the early years, children are taught about the expectations of good behaviour through play and social interaction. Learning routines are established quickly. Children develop their independence through repetition of simple tasks, such as engaging in personal hygiene, carrying their own bag or wiping tables after 'messy play' activities.

Staff help pupils to build positive and productive working relationships. Pupils are taught to respect individual differences. The personal, social and health education curriculum is grounded in the understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of the school's community and of the wider world.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in work-related learning, such as growing and selling vegetables. More formal opportunities, for example running the tuck shop, involve an application and interview process. Key stage 4 pupils are proud of their recent experience at a local museum, which led to a creative project and a mosaic featured in a royal photograph during the Platinum Jubilee.

Pupils and students are supported effectively to take their next steps in education and adult life, including through links with local colleges. Many pupils gain places in further education at the end of Year 11.

Staff are proud of their school. Most feel that leaders are mindful of their well-being. They value the wider opportunities for professional development available through the trust. Support is in place for new leaders as they establish their capacity to consolidate and build on curriculum changes, including developments to the teaching of reading. Governors and the trust are equally ambitious for their pupils. They understand their role in holding school leaders to account for the quality of education. Most parents speak positively of the difference the school makes to their children's lives.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding procedures are well understood. Pupils are taught how to keep safe and when to say 'no'. Staff training ensures that they are clear about what to look out for if a pupil may be at risk of harm. The required checks on the suitability of new employees to work with children are appropriately completed. Effective links with external agencies help to ensure that additional support is available to vulnerable pupils when needed. Leaders follow up on concerns quickly. Safeguarding records are well maintained and regularly checked.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's leadership team is still developing. Some leaders are relatively new, so capacity to consolidate and build on the implementation of curriculum improvements is still being established. Leaders, including the trust, should continue to check that staff have the training they need. Leaders should monitor and review processes to securely identify what is working well and what needs to improve further.
- Although most pupils attend school regularly, some do not attend as regularly as they should. This means that they cannot learn when they are not in school. Leaders should continue to work closely with pupils and families to remove any barriers to attendance so that all pupils attend and can achieve well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school of the same name to be good in June 2015.

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	145529
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10227564
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special converter
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	216
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alison Randall
Headteacher	Ellie Weatherall
Website	www.churchillpark.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Churchill Park School is a special school catering for pupils with a wide range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties entering the school is increasing year on year.
- The school became part of the Unity Education Trust in July 2021, following the closure of the previous trust, known as KWEST, which it joined in 2018.
- The school offers places for pupils aged from four to 19.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A high proportion of pupils have complex needs linked to speech, communication and language, including autism spectrum disorder.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including representatives from the Unity Education Trust. They also met with the leaders responsible for pupils' personal development, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. She also met with the chief executive officer from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in pupils' physical development and learning in mathematics. They also looked at communication, speech and language, including reading, and pupils' vocational learning.
- Alongside lesson visits, inspectors spoke informally with pupils and looked at their work. They held a meeting with curriculum leaders to review curriculum planning and spoke with a wider group of staff about the lessons visited.
- Inspectors checked school policies, pupils' safeguarding records and the pre-employment checks made on the suitability of staff to work with children.
- The 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for school staff, 16 responses from pupils and 29 free-text comments from parents were considered alongside the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Lucas

Her Majesty's Inspector

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