

Inspection of a good school: Heathfield Special School

Oldbury Way, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3BN

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2022

Outcome

Heathfield Special School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to Heathfield Special School. Their enjoyment in their learning is clear to see. The school values are an intrinsic part of everything they do. Pupils strive to achieve goals which will earn them 'values wristbands'. These are colourful, tangible rewards which pupils understand and which help them learn to be responsible, respectful members of their school community.

Leaders work with determination to ensure pupils achieve their potential. Pupils' personal targets, derived from their education, health and care plans, are carefully woven throughout the well-crafted school curriculum. Consequently, pupils thrive. They develop their confidence and resilience and are well prepared for secondary school.

Pupils try their best and behave very well. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They use consistent routines and thoughtful approaches that help pupils to manage their own behaviour effectively. As a result, there is a calm atmosphere around the school.

Staff know and understand the pupils in their class exceptionally well; they care deeply about pupils' well-being. Consequently, pupils feel safe. They know that staff will always listen to them. As one parent commented, 'It takes a special person to hear what a child cannot say, and we are lucky to have a school full of special people at Heathfield.'

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

Ambitious leaders have successfully ensured that pupils' learning is appropriate and meaningful. They have planned a cohesive curriculum divided into three pathways, which ensures pupils' different special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well catered for. Expert curriculum leaders work together particularly well, sharing their knowledge. As a result, in the majority of subjects, pupils at all stages of development have suitable, sequentially planned learning activities in each subject. Knowledgeable teachers deliver these in an engaging way, so that pupils successfully build on what they

have learned before. Staff closely monitor pupils' learning, accurately assessing understanding in the moment and in the longer term. These strengths across the curriculum are because leaders have been making improvements over the last year. However, there are some subjects which still need to be sequentially planned to ensure that pupils in the earliest stages of development receive suitable learning activities.

Pupils across the school love listening to the stories staff read to them. Pupils are supported very well to enjoy and understand books, despite the difficulties they may have as a result of their SEND. Pupils who are able to learn to read enjoy doing so using a structured phonics programme. Since leaders introduced this new programme less than a year ago, staff have quickly developed their expertise so as to plan learning with precision and engage pupils really well. Pupils at an earlier stage of development, including those in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), develop an understanding of different sounds so that they will be ready to learn to read as soon as possible. For example, children in the EYFS have fun and learn through thoughtfully sequenced activities using musical instruments and body percussion.

The school environment is carefully considered to enable pupils to cope with and engage in their surroundings while learning. Pupils told me with delight how they enjoyed using the 'reading shed' in the outdoor classroom. Pupils also benefit from a wealth of therapies.

Successfully promoting pupils' personal development is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils at all stages of development participate in a wealth of regular enrichment activities and visits. Staff carefully plan these to ensure that pupils learn to access as much of their wider community as possible. As well as these regular trips, big events such as festivals provide pupils with age-appropriate opportunities to socialise and enjoy time with family and friends.

A determination to empower pupils runs through the core of the school. Wherever possible, pupils are taught and encouraged to take ownership of their personal targets, building their sense of self. Staff talk passionately about enabling all pupils to make informed choices, regardless of their level of SEND.

There is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Heathfield special school is a warm, friendly place to work as well as in which to learn.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding. Well-trained staff keep careful oversight of pupils in lessons and around the school. The staff's in-depth knowledge of pupils enables them to notice anything worrying. Staff are vigilant to potential risks and quickly report anything that concerns them. They understand fully pupils' additional vulnerabilities because of their SEND. Leaders ensure that when concerns are reported, they are dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Leaders' regular safeguarding newsletters provide parents and staff with useful, current information.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While leaders have ensured that planning for progression is strong in the majority of subjects, and for pupils following all three pathways, this is not consistently strong in all subjects. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils do not receive appropriate learning activities which would allow them to reach their full potential. This is particularly the case for pupils in the earliest stages of development. Leaders should ensure that planning for pupils' progression is consistently strong in all subjects.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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.

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	116607
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10240336
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tina Ellis
Headteacher	Rachel Weldon
Website	www.heathfieldhants.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Heathfield Special School caters for pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Heathfield Special School is part of the federation of Heathfield and St Francis Schools. St Francis School is an all-through special school situated next door. The schools share a governing body. The majority of Heathfield Special School's senior leadership teamwork across both schools. This includes the executive headteacher, named as the headteacher in this inspection.

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 executive headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and teachers. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. These deep dives included discussions with curriculum leaders and teachers,

lesson visits with leaders, talking to or observing pupils and looking at their work/evidence of their learning. The lead inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans, pupils' work and a range of documentation, including for individual pupils. This included EHC plans and individual pupil targets. The lead inspector also looked at the school's self-evaluation and the federation improvement plan.
- To look closely at safeguarding in the school, inspectors spoke to leaders, staff, pupils and governors. The lead inspector looked at a range of safeguarding documentation and systems, including the school's single central record, which contains details of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors considered 32 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the views of 40 staff who completed the Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Maxine McDonald-Taylor, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Long

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022