

Inspection of a good school: Hazel Court School

Larkspur Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 8EJ

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 November 2022

Outcome

Hazel Court School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning and are proud of their achievements. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well, and pupils feel safe in their care. Pupils are confident and, because they trust staff to look after them well, they challenge themselves in their learning. This helps to prepare them for adulthood.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Communication is at the heart of everything the school does. Staff place huge importance on helping pupils to communicate well. They help pupils to gain the knowledge and skills that they will need for their lives ahead.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Staff skilfully support pupils, recognising that pupils' behaviour is a form of communication. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. If a pupil's behaviour slips, staff use personalised strategies to remind them of what is expected and quickly bring them back on track. Bullying is rare. If there is any bullying, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

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

Leaders have designed a highly ambitious curriculum that also closely matches the needs of each individual pupil. The curriculum has three 'phases' that work like pathways and that are designed to meet pupils' particular needs. Staff use assessment effectively to determine which phase pupils work in. These provide excellent learning opportunities for pupils and are always focused on building learning step by step. This high-quality provision starts in Year 7 and continues through to the sixth form. Everything is geared towards pupils achieving lifelong success.

The curriculum has a strong focus on communication. This provides pupils with the building blocks they need for adult life, such as being able to express their wishes and staying safe in the community and online. As a result of this carefully sequenced information, pupils can remember the risks that they may face. Pupils are supported to communicate using a range of means, including symbols and highly appropriate electronic devices. They develop their communication skills exceptionally well.

Leaders and staff are committed to helping pupils and students to manage their own behaviour. By approaching negative behaviour as a form of communication, staff quickly understand what is wrong and use planned responses to help. Because of this, learning is not disrupted. Positive behaviour targets ensure that pupils recognise when they achieve success and they appreciate the rewards they receive for reaching their goals.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils' broader development. It demonstrates ambition for all pupils towards the world of work and adulthood. The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is of a high quality. Pupils enjoy lessons that include aspects of fundamental British values. They take part in whole-school activities every day, which ensures that there is a real sense of togetherness. One parent said that there is a 'welcoming and caring environment'.

Outside the school buildings, there is a range of opportunities for pupils to immerse themselves in through enrichment activities. These include learning to use public transport, using the school caravan, trips to London and residential trips to the Isle of Wight. Staff use every available opportunity to show all pupils and their families that pupils can play a key role in local industry, particularly in hospitality, services and tourism.

The excellent sixth form provides a smooth transition for students from the secondary school, alongside students from another secondary school in the trust. It continues to deliver a broad curriculum through the school's three 'phases'. Teachers in the sixth form know their students exceptionally well. They also provide them with a range of other experiences and opportunities. For example, every Friday, students run a school café where they can assume a range of roles. During this time, key achievements from the week are celebrated. As a result, students make informed decisions about their future.

Staff are proud to work at the school and value the support leaders give them. They work closely with colleagues from other schools in the trust, resulting in effective sharing of strong practice. Leaders consider staff well-being and their workload. Governors challenge leaders to continually improve the quality of education for all pupils. They play a key and active role in ensuring that Hazel Court School receives constructive support from all levels of the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong safeguarding culture. They prioritise training for staff. Staff at all levels are quick to act to keep pupils safe. They know their pupils exceptionally

well, meaning that they are particularly alert to the additional risks their pupils might face. Staff are clear about the processes they should follow if they have concerns. Governors take their roles very seriously and are well informed about safeguarding.

Through the carefully planned curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. All pupils are taught how to communicate their opinions and to recognise when they need to seek help.

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 Hazel Court School to be good in July 2016.

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	145254
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10241573
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Margaret Neal
Principal	Kirsty Eydmann
Website	www.thesouthfieldtrust.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Hazel Court School is a special school that caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years.
- The school joined The Southfield Trust in September 2018. Hazel Court School has a local governing board that it shares with one other school in the trust.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school specialises in meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative education provision.

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 chief executive officer, the executive principal, the head of secondary school and the head of sixth form, as well as middle leaders. Inspectors also met with two members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. They checked the school's record of recruitment checks and spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses of parents and carers to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and their free-text comments.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in communication, mathematics 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, communicated with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Gary Tostevin, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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