

Inspection of a good school: Shepherds Down Special School

Shepherds Lane, Compton, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 2AJ

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

Outcome

Shepherds Down Special School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff greet each pupil with smiles and a warm welcome at the start of the school day. This helps pupils to feel comfortable and safe. Pupils chat happily to friends and staff as they arrive in the morning, keen to get on with the day ahead.

Staff expect pupils to work hard and behave well and, for the most part, they do. Pupils move around the school sensibly and responsibly. They are keen to do their best, and work carefully in their books. Anxiety and frustration make it hard for some pupils to behave well all the time. Adults take good care of pupils who are struggling, responding calmly and sensitively so that pupils feel secure. Pupils respect adults and are kind to each other. They are polite and interested in visitors. Leaders act quickly if any concerns about bullying are raised.

Pupils love being outdoors and working together, including during forest school sessions. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum supports both academic and personal development very well. During the inspection, for example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed working together to create insects, using clay and twigs. They talked about different parts of the insect, and how they had made them, clearly, proudly and with great enthusiasm.

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

Leaders have developed a broad, balanced and carefully designed curriculum which makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils follow different curriculum pathways according to their needs and contexts. Staff assess pupils' learning continuously, thoughtfully adjusting activities according to pupils' needs.

Leaders have strengthened the teaching of reading since the previous inspection. The school's well-established phonics programme works well. Teachers use a wide range of resources and activities to capture pupils' interest and to support their learning. During the inspection, for example, some of the youngest children in the school quickly became

engrossed as their teacher used paint, symbols and lots of glitter to tell them a story of colour and sound. Pupils' work illustrates their progress through the reading curriculum, as their knowledge and skills develop, and they learn how to apply what they have learned to both their reading and their written work.

Opportunities to support pupils' personal development are an integral part of school life and threaded through the curriculum. Pupils learn a wide range of topics which help prepare them for the future, including cookery, online safety and relationships. During the inspection, for example, pupils practised asking for ingredients, choosing fillings and cutting up foods, while making and eating pancakes. Staff use an extensive range of resources to build pupils' communication skills, such as signing and communication boards. Members of the school council spoke confidently about their work acting as role models for good behaviour, helping the younger pupils and organising events to raise money for charities. Staff in the Reception classes take great care to make sure that children are ready to move to the next stage. The early years leader summed up the school's approach when she said, 'We cradle them through the process to make sure that they feel safe.'

Pupils usually behave well during lessons. A small number of pupils struggle with their behaviour because of their specific needs. However, effective behaviour management procedures mean that learning in lessons is rarely disrupted. Staff are alert to pupils' responses and use a successful range of strategies, including good humour and lots of reassurance, to support good behaviour. They value the role played by the school's behaviour support team and say that leaders are always on hand to discuss any concerns.

Leaders recently introduced a new programme to help pupils to recognise and manage their own feelings. This is not yet fully established in the school, although there are early signs of success. Pupils are beginning to learn techniques which are helping them to play a part in regulating their own behaviour.

The headteacher has built an effective staff team. Staff share the headteacher's ambitions for the school and its pupils. They enjoy working in the school and feel well supported. Parents are very positive about the school. Many enthused about the school's role in helping them and their children. Several parents said that the school goes 'above and beyond' what is expected to support their children. One commented, 'This school has changed the lives of our whole family and we cannot thank them enough,' while another said, 'My son loves being at school. I want to thank Shepherds Down for giving him a safe, warm and loving environment in which to learn and develop.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders use a range of activities to make sure that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding. Leaders act quickly if there are any concerns about pupils' welfare, including liaising with agencies and parents where appropriate. Staff are confident about what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Parents say that the school takes good care of their children. Governors have strengthened their oversight of safeguarding

arrangements in recent months, making sure that all governors understand their shared responsibility for complying with their statutory safeguarding duties. Recruitment and suitability checks are completed promptly and managed effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have recently introduced a programme to help pupils to play a more active part in recognising their feelings and managing their behaviour. This is not yet consistently in place across the school. Variations in how well the programme is delivered mean that some pupils lack the strategies they need to help them to regulate their own responses, and so behave less well than they might. Leaders should implement their plans to develop this aspect of the school's work.

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 March 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	116642
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200541
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bob Senior
Headteacher	Deborah Gooderham
Website	www.shepherdsdown.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Shepherds Down Special School caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including complex learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. A small number of pupils have degenerative or life-limiting medical conditions or are terminally ill.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use alternative 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 headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection. They also considered the views expressed by staff in Ofsted's survey.

- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority. She also met with five governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. Deep dives included visiting a range of lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in the classrooms, during the lunch break and at other times during the school day.
- The views of parents were gathered through a range of sources, including the Ofsted Parent View survey and informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors assessed the school's culture of safeguarding throughout the inspection. They checked the single central record and reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Bagust

Ofsted Inspector

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