

Inspection of a good school: Foxfield School

New Hey Road, Woodchurch, Merseyside CH49 5LF

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

Foxfield School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who come to Foxfield School have a wide range of needs and difficulties. Leaders have high expectations that all pupils will try their hardest to learn well and build up what they know and can do. Pupils fulfil these expectations. They typically improve in their learning and development during their time in the school. Staff provide effective support which closely matches pupils' needs. This support helps pupils to achieve well.

Pupils told inspectors that they like coming to Foxfield School because they enjoy seeing their friends and their teachers. Pupils also said that their teachers keep them safe in school. There are positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils explained that staff look after them well. Staff are always there to help them if they have any worries.

Leaders and staff expect pupils to behave well. For the most part, pupils' behaviour is polite and respectful. Some pupils misbehave because of their needs. However, teachers and other staff remain calm when this happens and deal with the situation effectively. Leaders are good at managing bullying should it occur.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities beyond their formal lessons. For example, they attend swimming club in the school's own swimming pool. Pupils also sing in the choir or take part in sports and fitness activities.

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

Leaders have designed a well-organised curriculum that closely meets the needs of all pupils, as well as students in the sixth form. There are a wide variety of subjects and experiences on offer. These are all focused on giving pupils as much knowledge and help as possible to prepare them for adult life. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and be able to do. They have arranged the learning in a logical order.

Subject knowledge among teachers is strong. Teachers who are not specialists in a subject receive helpful support from those who are.

Leaders have put in place effective methods to assess how well pupils are learning and developing. They make checks on pupils' knowledge and specific needs when they start at the school. There is a strong emphasis on assessing pupils' emotions and behaviour first. Teachers work on strengthening these aspects of pupils' development to enable them to access learning more successfully. Teachers adapt their teaching well to meet the wide array of pupils' needs. Teachers use various resources, including different types of specialist technology, to help them in this. They provide frequent and effective support during lessons to ensure that pupils understand the learning. Teachers use information they gain from assessment activities well to help them to plan the next phase of their teaching.

Leaders ensure that pupils acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes which enable them to develop independence and be as prepared as they can be for life as an adult. Typically, all students who leave the school after completing their sixth-form courses go on to suitable providers that meet their needs and strengths. These providers range from supported living services to further education colleges. Most students leave with qualifications in subjects that they have studied. Leaders have recently expanded the qualifications available to be more ambitious, such as awards for functional skills in English and mathematics.

Communication and reading are key features of the curriculum. Leaders organise the teaching of these subjects well. Some pupils are unable to read because of their needs. These pupils successfully learn effective ways to communicate with others. Most pupils who can read do so with fluency and accuracy.

Some pupils are at the early stages of reading. Leaders have an effective scheme in place to teach these pupils phonics to enable them to become fluent and accurate readers. However, a few pupils in this group find their reading book too hard. This is because the reading book which their teacher has given them does not match what they know about phonics closely enough. This means that they find it difficult to develop fluency and accuracy.

Leaders have effective methods in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They analyse these needs carefully and provide strong support that enables pupils to achieve well. Leaders involve parents and carers closely in deciding on the help that will benefit pupils the most.

There are times when pupils' needs result in incidents of misbehaviour. Staff have a confident and gently insistent approach to helping pupils to recover from these episodes and return to their learning successfully. This helps to keep any disruption to pupils' learning to a minimum.

Leaders provide well for pupils' wider development outside the classroom. There are activities such as sensory yoga and art therapy that support pupils' emotional needs and mental health. In personal, social, health and economic education, pupils find out about

matters such as rights and responsibilities, and respecting different cultures. There is high-quality careers guidance in place which carefully matches potential careers paths to pupils' strengths and interests.

Governors know the school well. They understand their roles and responsibilities. Governors provide challenge for school leaders to ensure that they are held to account for their work. Teachers said that senior leaders are thoughtful about their welfare and workload. Leaders support staff well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The systems for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns about pupils are thorough and robust. Staff have received suitable training to enable them to be aware of risks to pupils. They know how to report safeguarding issues. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns.

Pupils receive the help that they need. Leaders make referrals when necessary to external organisations, such as the local authority's children's social care team. Leaders understand the correct processes involved, should any allegations be made against a member of staff.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive information about how to keep themselves safe. For instance, pupils learn about internet safety and find out about consent and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few pupils, who are in the early stages of reading, find their reading books too difficult to read with fluency. This is because teachers have not ensured that the reading books that pupils have received match their knowledge of phonics closely enough. Leaders should make certain that teachers provide these pupils with reading books which contain letters and sounds that pupils know well, so that they can develop better fluency and accuracy in their reading.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 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	105131
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10256225
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	174
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steve Williams
Headteacher	Martin McKenna
Website	www.foxfieldschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Foxfield School is a community special school for pupils and students aged 11 to 19 with various needs, the most common of which is autism spectrum disorder. The school also caters for pupils with severe learning difficulty, profound and multiple learning difficulty and multi-sensory impairment.
- The school has recently opened a second site at Birket Avenue, Moreton, Merseyside CH46 1RB. This is currently used for pupils aged 16 to 19. Leaders also make use of facilities at the neighbouring Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, Fender Lane, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside CH46 9PA.
- Leaders do not use any alternative providers.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2020.
- A new deputy headteacher and four new members of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the last inspection.

- The chair of governors was appointed to the role in September 2021.

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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: literacy, including reading, numeracy and sensory learning. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading to members of staff. He also spoke with subject leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders, three members of the governing body, including the chair, and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They looked at a range of other documents linked to pupils' welfare and their education. Inspectors talked with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding and about pupils' wider experiences of school. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The lead inspector visited the school's second site at Birket Avenue, Moreton, Merseyside CH46 1RB. He also visited Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, Fender Lane, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside CH46 9PA.
- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Parkinson

Ofsted Inspector

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