

Inspection of an outstanding school: Fiveways Special School

Victoria Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 5AZ

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

'My child is put at the centre of all decisions' and 'consistent and passionate' are views shared by parents. Pupils love coming to this school. It is a place where they thrive and blossom.

Behaviour is exemplary. Relationships between adults and pupils are exceptional. Staff create an atmosphere which is calm and purposeful. They understand each pupil's unique needs, enabling them to reduce anxiety and stress. As a result, pupils are happy, feel safe and achieve well.

Provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils, irrespective of their disability or need, take pleasure in the rich and varied wider opportunities on offer. For example, orchestra, theatre groups and cricket are just a few activities available to pupils. These increase their confidence and build self-esteem. Pupils and students develop high levels of independence through these and other experiences. This enables them to contribute positively to their community and prepare them for adulthood.

The school has expanded rapidly since 2021, with many new pupils and staff joining. Leaders are working hard to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of every pupil. They recognise that more work is needed in some curriculum areas.

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

Pupils are at the centre of all conversations leaders have about the quality of education and care they provide. The aim of the school, 'What does a good life look like for me now and in the future?', shines through. Leaders aspire for all pupils to develop the life skills they need.

Leaders have crafted an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. It is personalised to the needs of the pupil. However, as the school welcomes pupils with moderate learning difficulties, leaders recognise that, in some subjects, the curriculum is not implemented as effectively as they would like. As a result, pupils do not gain the planned knowledge they need to achieve as well as they could. Many subject leaders are new to the school and have not had the opportunity to monitor the subjects they lead. This means they do not know if pupils are acquiring the knowledge and skills they need.

Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on communication. The use of technology, signs and symbols promotes pupils' communication skills. Staff help pupils with the most complex needs to appreciate the world around them through sensory activities, using sound, smell and touch. This focus on communication starts in the early years and goes through to the sixth form. Staff use all communication and interaction tools superbly. This enables pupils to share their views, minimising frustration and anxiety.

Leaders and adults share the aspiration that, where possible, pupils will become at least functional readers by the time they leave school. Pupils start phonics when it is appropriate for them to do so. They use this knowledge well when they read. Staff receive training in the teaching of phonics and early reading. Leaders provide regular support and guidance. Staff appreciate this supportive approach; it gives them the knowledge and confidence to teach early reading with skill. Pupils who struggle have the additional help and support they need to improve their reading skills. Those pupils who are unable to learn to read enjoy books through sensory stories.

Developing pupils' independence and preparing them for adult life begin the moment they start at Fiveways. Pupils and students receive excellent careers guidance and are encouraged to have high aspirations for their futures. Leaders provide high-quality work placements to enable students in the sixth form to experience the world of work. As a result, teachers plan each student's next steps carefully.

Leaders are determined that pupils and students experience life to the full during their time at the school. For example, pupils and students have access to the Duke of Edinburgh awards and the Ten Tors challenge. These many varied activities provide them with pride and a sense of achievement.

Personal, social and health education is threaded throughout the curriculum. There is a focus on relationships, personal safety, and physical and mental well-being. Staff are skilful in spotting any changes in pupils' demeanour. They respond to these changes with sensitivity and care.

Adults in the school are rightly proud of the nurture and care they provide. This is seen from the moment pupils arrive at school. Pupils are greeted with a smile and a warm welcome. 'Staff make every child feel special and happy' and 'kind and patient' are typical comments made by parents.

Governors know the school well. They provide leaders with a great balance of support and challenge. There is a continuous cycle of school development to ensure that pupils and students receive the very best quality of education and care. Leaders are outward

looking and work closely with external experts to ensure the school continues to grow and flourish. Staff, irrespective of their role or length of service, love working at the school. They welcome the support leaders provide for their well-being and the consideration given to providing an appropriate work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. Staff know what to do if they think a pupil is at risk. Leaders make timely and well-informed decisions. They work closely with other agencies and are not afraid to challenge decisions made to ensure that pupils are safe. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work, including safer recruitment procedures.

Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including healthy relationships. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders recognise that in some subjects, the curriculum is not implemented as effectively as in the more developed subjects for some pupils. As a result, these pupils do not gain the planned knowledge they need to achieve as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that their plans to strengthen all subjects are implemented effectively.
- Many subject leaders are new to the school and have not had the opportunity to monitor the subjects they lead. This means they do not know if pupils are acquiring the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders are able to check the quality of provision to assure themselves that pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in July 2014.

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	123944
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10268679
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	95
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	11
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Malcolm Gulliver
Headteacher	Swavek Nowakiewicz
Website	www.fivewayschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe and complex learning difficulties.
- The headteacher started in post September 2021.
- The school has undergone significant expansion since the last inspection with an additional four classes. Consequently, there has been a considerable growth in the number of staff working at the school.
- The school uses one alternative provider for their pupils which is registered with Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, school staff and four members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held telephone conversations with a representative from Somerset local authority and two school improvement partners.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a selection of pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding leader acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies and responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Hannon

Ofsted Inspector

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