

Inspection of an outstanding school: Seven Hills School

Granville Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S2 2RJ

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 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?

Seven Hills School is a secondary special school which caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 with severe and profound learning difficulties. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils and have planned a curriculum around pupils' individualised needs. Using personalised learning targets, teachers support pupils to develop their independence. They focus on the skills that pupils will need to be prepared for later learning and adulthood. Despite these high expectations, in some subjects leaders have not considered carefully enough what pupils will learn.

All staff foster warm and caring relationships with pupils. There is a strong team approach. Pupils are supported well by the pastoral or behaviour support team. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know that adults will deal with any issues immediately and sensitively.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They benefit from an impressive range of activities to promote their wider personal development, including sporting activities, creative arts and community projects. Pupils have an extremely smooth transition through the school and into adulthood.

Leaders ensure they include parents and carers in their child's school experience. Parents speak highly of the support their child receives. One parent, echoing the views of others, commented: 'The school has brought out the absolute best in him. The staff are amazing. I could not have wished for a better school.'

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

Leaders want pupils to become as independent as possible. They have designed a curriculum within four pathways to suit pupils' needs. Each pathway sets out in broad strokes what pupils will learn.

In English, pupils on one pathway follow a curriculum that focuses on teaching communication and interaction skills. This includes being able to express needs, make choices and take turns. Pupils on other pathways are taught to read using an established phonics programme. On the sixth-form pathway, emphasis is placed on students' reading skills in real-life contexts, for example reading recipes. Reading activities take place daily, with support tailored to meet each pupil's needs.

Leaders have recently adopted a new mathematics curriculum. Pupils are now learning mathematical methods, such as addition and subtraction, using concrete materials. Once they understand and can remember the methods, teachers gradually move on to more abstract learning over time. However, in both English and mathematics, leaders have not identified clearly enough the knowledge that pupils need to learn and when.

Leaders are proud of the musical offer in school. They want pupils to enjoy and explore music. The curriculum is well sequenced and supports pupils to develop their singing and percussion skills. Pupils can take part in performance outside of school.

Teachers are reflective about the needs of each pupil and use assessment tools to carefully plot the next steps of learning. However, most curriculum subjects do not clearly outline the knowledge that pupils should have learned over time so that teachers can check it has been remembered.

The number of pupils with complex communication needs has increased over recent years. A personalised curriculum offer is in place for these pupils, with high levels of staff support. However, some lessons do not provide the communication systems and structure these pupils need to engage in learning.

Leaders invest in a range of cultural capital activities to ensure all pupils receive high-quality experiences, both in and out of school. These experiences include live music, sporting events, charity fundraising and a recent special educational needs and/or disabilities student summit. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed these events.

Leaders support pupils well to prepare for life beyond school. Key stage 4 pupils are able to work towards a range of entry-level qualifications, including English and mathematics. Sixth-form students continue their studies with a 'preparation for adulthood' focus. Students learn independence skills, such as travel and shopping within the local community. Where possible, work placements are sought for students. All learners are supported effectively to move on to further education or adult social care places.

Governors are highly supportive of school leaders and hold a clear vision of improving life chances for all pupils at Seven Hills School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Leaders and staff are well trained. The procedures in place to identify and report concerns are well understood by staff. Staff are strong advocates for all pupils. They are vigilant in looking for indications that pupils could be at risk of harm.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different risks in a way that is appropriate for their age and level of cognitive understanding.

When safeguarding needs are identified, leaders engage very well with external agencies to get timely support for pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Current subject curriculums do not set out clearly enough the knowledge and skills pupils need to acquire. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculums to ensure they provide teachers with the key knowledge they should teach, and when. This will ensure that pupils build on prior knowledge and remember more over time.
- Provision for some pupils with complex social communication needs is not consistent. As a result, some pupils struggle to engage in learning. Leaders should continue to develop support for pupils' communication and sensory needs.

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 January 2013.

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	135287
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10211273
Type of school	Secondary and sixth form 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	211
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Williams
Headteacher	Kerry Tute
Website	http://www.sevenhillslearning.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Seven Hills School is a secondary special school in Sheffield local authority.
- The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 19 with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- Since the previous inspection, a new sixth-form building has been completed, called 'The Bridge'. Seven Hills shares this building with Talbot School. Forty-six students are in the sixth form.

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.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteachers.
- Inspectors conducted a telephone interview with the local authority representative.
- Inspectors met with the vice-chair and parent representatives of the local governing board.
- Inspectors spoke with a small, mixed group of boys and girls.
- Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including the early stages of reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- One inspector visited the sixth-form provision at The Bridge.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation relating to the school's curriculum, along with the school's own evaluation and its development plans.
- Inspectors reviewed planning and assessment documentation linked to pupils' education, health and care plans, including behaviour support plans.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to the staff survey, and comments from parents through Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Berni Moorcroft, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Mills

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 2023