

Inspection of Kingsley Special Academy

Churchill Way, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 5DP

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Kingsley Special Academy is a warm, welcoming and inclusive school. Staff care deeply for the pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders' vision of 'helping people living in extraordinary circumstances to live ordinary lives' is truly at the heart of everything that staff do in this school.

Pupils are happy at Kingsley and feel safe. Pupils know that bullying is unkind. They say that it does not happen. Pupils say that they have adults whom they trust in school who would help them if they had a worry.

Leaders' expectations are high. There are no limits on what staff believe their pupils can achieve. Pupils know that they are here to learn. From early years onwards, staff encourage pupils to regulate their behaviour and join in with lessons.

Pupils enjoy the regular Camp Kingsley, as well as the annual talent show. Pupils proudly shared their experience of singing in the 'Young Voices' concert shown on the television show 'Blue Peter'.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly happy with the school. One comment, typical of many, was: 'Kingsley Special Academy is a truly special place! The staff know every single child well and greet them each morning with a happy smile and encouraging words'.

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

Pupils and children who attend the school face significant challenges with learning. They receive an outstanding quality of education. Leaders have planned, and teachers deliver, a sequenced and well-thought-through curriculum. This highly flexible and ambitious curriculum means that leaders provide for each child's needs as they change and evolve. This is not straightforward. Every pupil needs something unique. Staff strike a very delicate balance between teaching a range of topics while also addressing the specific needs of pupils, as outlined in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. This draws on checking on pupils' learning and identifying the next learning steps.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills. This focus on communication starts in early years. Staff help pupils to communicate using various communication aids. Developing pupils' communication skills is an important part of the school's curriculum. It is embedded in lessons across the school. Staff make effective use of objects, symbols and 'signalong' to enable all pupils to have a voice. Speech and language therapists work alongside teachers to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Staff help pupils with the most complex needs to appreciate the world around them.

Staff are experts in early reading. They use a variety of ways to introduce pupils to books and stories. The school library is well used and enables pupils to enjoy books.

Teachers use well-defined strategies to engage most pupils with sounds and symbols to prepare them for phonics-based teaching. Leaders make sure that children start learning to read as soon as they are ready.

Staff approach negative behaviour as a form of communication. Staff are highly attuned to the feelings and anxieties of pupils and are successful at minimising these. By doing this, staff quickly understand what is wrong and provide support and help pupils to learn to regulate their behaviour and manage their emotions. Disruption to learning is rare. Early years staff build strong and trusting relationships with children. This ensures that children settle quickly and flourish.

Personal development is a high priority. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality. All Year 6 pupils take part in a trip to the Isle of Wight for a week. This helps to get them to develop their independence and to be ready for the next steps in their education. Pupils enjoy the annual celebration of local special schools in the 'Kids Day Out' in the park. They enjoy trips, for example to the National Space Centre and the Polar Museum in Cambridge. All children and pupils enjoy cooking and swimming regularly in school. Pupils relish the regular Camp Kingsley sleepovers, which develop character. Pupils enjoy activities at lunchtime, such as tri-golf, as well as the after-school club. Pupils learn about different faiths. For example, they enjoyed celebrating Holi in a festival of colours that included a range of sensory experiences for all.

Governors know the school very well. They provide leaders with support and challenge in equal measure. Leaders work closely with the trust and external experts to ensure that the school continues to grow and flourish.

Staff are extremely proud to work at this school. Leaders and governors engage with staff effectively. They are keen to ensure that staff do not experience undue pressure due to workload demands. Staff feel valued and listened to. They speak warmly about the care shown by leaders for their mental health and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. All staff are acutely aware of the risks that their pupils may face, and staff know how to spot signs that pupils may be experiencing harm. Leaders are relentless in securing the help that vulnerable pupils and their families need. They work highly effectively with external agencies, as well as their own in-house therapeutic teams. Leaders have developed a multi-agency approach to keeping pupils safe.

Leaders ensure that the pre-employment checks completed on staff are thorough.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They know that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns and will help.

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	137875
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10240422
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Scott
Headteacher	Ben Campbell-Kemp
Website	www.kingsley.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at Kingsley Special Academy have an EHC plan.
- The majority of pupils have autism spectrum disorder, physical disability, moderate learning difficulty or severe learning difficulty.
- The school is part of the Kingsley Learning Foundation.
- The current headteacher took up post in January 2022.
- Leaders do not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second 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.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading and communication, mathematics, the creative curriculum, physical education and physical development, and the social and emotional learning and life skills curriculum. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- To further look at the curriculum, inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum plans in some other subjects, including looking at examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the actions leaders take to keep pupils safe. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspectors met with pupils, both verbal and non-verbal, to gather their views about the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance, and documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour. Inspectors also reviewed the documents available on the school's website.
- Inspectors observed informal times, including pupils' arrival at school and break-and lunchtime.
- The lead inspector met with governors and trustees.
- Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Javier Sanchez-Garcia	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Wood	Ofsted Inspector

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