

Inspection of an outstanding school: Epinay Business and Enterprise School

Nevinson Avenue, South Shields NE34 8BT

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

Epinay Business and Enterprise School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at Epina Business and Enterprise School. Pupils told us that they really like their school and enjoy their learning. They feel happy and safe here because they know that adults care about them. Pupils are supported in a very individual way. Staff help pupils to develop their confidence and resilience. Staff promote pupil interaction at breaktimes and lunchtime. This supports pupils to develop their social and communication skills.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Staff plan experiences of the wider world into their learning offer. Pupils take part in an excellent range of out-of-classroom activities. Pupils thrive in their personal development. They learn through real-life experiences, such as visits to local places of worship, museums, parks, the football ground and shops. They develop confidence in travelling independently. Pupils are able to link their trips and visits to their learning in the classroom. This leads to valuable work-related learning and opportunities for future employment.

Pupils behave very well in school and do not feel that bullying happens. They are confident that if pupils were unkind, the staff in school would act quickly. Well-trained staff help pupils to cope with any anxieties or concerns they may have.

Parents and carers showed their appreciation of the staff's hard work to support their young people. Their many positive comments can be summed up in a quote from one parent, 'Teachers do everything they can to help them to develop their independence and reach their full potential. I wouldn't choose anywhere else for my child.'

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

Leaders have thought very carefully about what they want pupils to learn. The staff have developed a phased approach to the curriculum plan. Through this plan they tailor learning so that it is exactly matched to the needs of the individual pupils. Staff have high expectations for the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils need to help them to be successful. Staff teach the subjects of the national curriculum to all pupils up to Year 9 at the level that best

suits their needs. Teachers meet the range of pupils' needs extremely well. This supports pupils to achieve their best.

Staff know precisely what to teach to build the individual pupil's skills and knowledge. Leaders continue to develop accreditation routes that are carefully considered to best meet the needs of each pupil. These are exemplary. Sometimes, pupils develop skills through activities that help them to explore using their senses. Some pupils, who are able to, follow a more formal learning approach. For example, adults might support a pupil learning about capacity through sand and water trays. Other pupils might be completing more formal measurements and calculations.

Pupils are keen to join in lessons. Many pupils at the school find learning difficult and struggle to remember information. Adults are highly skilled at helping pupils to overcome this. Pupils practise their skills many times and in many different ways to build familiarity. For example, a pupil may learn counting skills and then practise them outdoors, while shopping, in food preparation, in other subject areas, and in number games and songs.

Reading is a very important part of the school day. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading are supported very well to develop the skills that will help them to be able to read words and sentences as they make progress. Adults are skilful in supporting pupils who are beginning to read short sentences to read more fluently. This helps pupils to develop an understanding of the books they are reading. Staff build lots of reading practice into the school day.

Pupils have excellent opportunities to enjoy a wide range of extra activities at school. For example, they learn to be healthy by getting involved in sport. They complete team-building activities and enjoy art, music, building with construction sets and cooking healthy meals. These activities are sensitively adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.

Staff in the sixth form help students to feel more independent. Teachers support students to learn how to be more independent in the community or at work. For example, students talked very enthusiastically about the tasks they carry out in the school's café. One student was delighted to be able to tell the inspectors about the qualification he has just passed through his work preparing, cooking and serving food. Students spend time on work experience. This experience supports students in being ready for the next stage in their career or education when they leave school.

Staff feel that leaders listen to them. They feel highly valued by the school leaders. Staff talk about the many ways in which leaders have supported them by reducing the pressures of their workload. They appreciate the ways in which leaders have 'gone the extra mile' to make them feel valued. Governors are very actively involved in the life of the school. They support the school well and provide effective challenge for leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a real strength of the school. The safeguarding and protection of pupils are extremely important to all adults in the school. Staff are exceptional at caring for very

vulnerable pupils and they take their responsibility extremely seriously. Leaders make sure that all the school policies and procedures are clear. Staff access highly effective training in the systems used in school. They know these processes in detail and can demonstrate how they put them into action. Any concerns about a pupil's safety or welfare are swiftly reported to the safeguarding team. Leaders follow up these concerns promptly. Adults make sure that pupils and their families are well looked after and supported. They work efficiently with external professionals to make sure that pupils get the help they need.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 2018.

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	108741
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10289983
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Audrey Huntley
Headteacher	Chris Rue
Website	https://epinay.org
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Epinay Business and Enterprise School is a special school that caters for pupils from the ages of 4 to 18 years.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school was not using any alternative provision at the time of this inspection.
- The school moved to this new site in September 2022.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, senior staff, teachers and the wider staff in school. Inspectors also spoke with the governors, a local authority representative and the school's improvement adviser.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and design and technology. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with senior leaders and subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work and met with pupils to discuss their experiences of learning.
- The inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding. Staff explained to inspectors how they kept children safe.
- The inspectors met with pupils and observed pupils during social times, at lunchtime and at breaktime.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Catherine Beard, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michael Wardle

His Majesty's Inspector

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