

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Springwell School

Hinkler Road, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 6DH

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Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

## **Outcome**

Springwell School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive in this hard-working, safe and smiling school community. Strong relationships are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils learn that their feelings matter and that their views count. Helping all pupils to communicate successfully is central to the school's work. During the inspection, inspectors were often welcomed by pupils with interested questions, warm smiles, or a gentle handshake.

Pupils behave exceptionally well almost all of the time. Those who occasionally struggle are supported by clear expectations, well-established routines and kindness. Leaders give high priority to the safety of pupils. They take suitable action if any concerns about bullying arise.

Teamwork is key to the school's approach. Staff understand each pupil's needs very well. They know precisely what to do to help them to achieve their best, encouraging, supporting, and applauding every step of the way.

Progress for individual pupils is often seen in tiny but significant achievements, such as the willingness to eat a new food, to play alongside classmates, or to tolerate clothing. Such small successes, when combined, represent a substantial step forward in learning, life skills and well-being for each pupil. One parent said, 'Our child is making such amazing progress; we will be forever thankful'.

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

The co-headteachers and their leadership team are highly ambitious for pupils. Their continuous drive to ensure high-quality education means that the school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection.

The school's carefully designed curriculum provides an effective framework for teaching and learning across the school. Pupils follow curriculum pathways according to their ages,

abilities, and stages of development. However, the real strength of the school's work lies in the skilful way that teachers build on this framework, providing a unique programme of learning for each individual pupil, which works beautifully. Pupils learn exceptionally well as a result, both personally and academically. They are taught key skills to support them in their future lives, such as how to keep healthy and stay safe.

The school provides a wide range of activities to support pupils' wider development, such as sports days, art events and regular swimming sessions in the school's hydrotherapy pool. Parents are understandably pleased with the school and the difference it has made to their children. One said, 'Springwell School is a fab school with fantastic staff, who really value and understand the kids', while another commented, 'I can't praise the school enough'.

Staff are experts in catching and holding pupils' attention so that they want to learn more. The youngest children develop a fascination with learning, which grows as they move up through the school. This starts in the classes for the youngest children, where children are encouraged to explore their environment with expert support, and continues throughout the school. Leaders give learning to read a high priority. They have introduced and developed a new programme for teaching phonics during the past few years. This is now securely established and taught consistently well. Pupils acquire increasingly secure early reading skills and develop a real enthusiasm for books.

Promoting independence and communication skills is central to the school's ethos, which asserts that 'Every child is entitled to a voice, and it is our job to support and encourage them to find those voices'. Staff employ a comprehensive range of strategies to support communication, such as pictures, symbols and sign language. The school is continuously looking for new ways to enable pupils to express their views and wishes. For instance, staff have worked with a local university to develop innovative ways of incorporating the views of some of the oldest pupils into transition arrangements with secondary schools.

Pupils are keen to learn, and they behave well in lessons most of the time. Adults know pupils extremely well and are skilled in noticing when they need to step in to provide support. This is also true of Springwell staff in the resourced provision on other school sites. These staff demonstrate the same high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour as their colleagues in the main school. The occasional timely reminder about 'work first' is often sufficient to refocus a disengaged pupil on the task in hand. Where incidents of more challenging behaviour occur, staff respond calmly and proportionately. They work closely with parents and pupils to devise individual behaviour support plans. Pupils are encouraged to recognise their own feelings, to understand the impact of their behaviour on others, and to develop strategies to manage anxieties and frustrations when they arise.

Staff are proud to work in the school. One said, 'We're a really strong team'. They feel that leaders are thoughtful about workload and responsive to feedback. Staff talk warmly about the quality of support and insight provided by the school's behaviour team. Governors are rightly proud of the school's achievements. They share leaders' commitment to continuous improvement and use a wide range of activities effectively to check the school's work.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are alert to pupils' heightened vulnerabilities due to their complex needs and pay close attention to their safety. They are confident about what to do if they have a worry, logging concerns carefully and following the school's safeguarding procedures consistently. Leaders use a suite of training, briefings and updates to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding. They maintain strong links with agencies, parents and carers as appropriate. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure that all staff suitability checks are completed in a timely manner. Leaders actively contribute to local initiatives to strengthen pupils' safety across the local authority.

## 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 March 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116620
<b>Local authority</b>	Southampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242120
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	271
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ann Langran
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Needham and Maria Burrows (co-headteachers)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.springwellschool.net">www.springwellschool.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Springwell School caters for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils have a severe level of learning difficulty, and many have associated disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder, speech and language disorders, and challenging behaviour. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school has undergone a significant expansion since the last inspection, which has included the creation of a two-storey building on the main site and a range of specialist facilities, including food technology rooms, art rooms, and several multi-sensory interactive rooms.
- The school's two co-headteachers were appointed in September 2020. They divide their time equally across the week.
- Twenty-three pupils attend off-site resourced provision based in three mainstream schools: Bitterne CE Primary School, Mount Pleasant Junior School, and Mason Moor Primary School. Pupils spend each morning in the resourced provision classes, where they are taught by Springwell staff, and some afternoons in mainstream classes, supported by Springwell staff.

- The school also has three early years classes. One is located in the main school building, while two are located in a building on a separate site: Springwell Startpoint Provision.

## 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 met with the co-headteachers, assistant headteachers, and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also met with two governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection. They also considered the views expressed by staff in Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, communication, mathematics, and personal development. Deep dives included visits to lessons, a review of samples of pupils' work, and discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons, during the lunch break, and at other times of the school day.
- Parents' views were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's survey, the school's own survey of parents' views, and informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors assessed the school's safeguarding culture throughout the inspection. They checked the single central record and reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records.

## Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Petch

His Majesty's Inspector

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