

Inspection of an outstanding school: Kingsbury Primary Special School

School Lane, Chapel House, Skelmersdale, Lancashire WN8 8EH

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

Kingsbury Primary Special School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this supportive and aspirational school. Their needs are placed firmly at the centre of 'The Kingsbury Way'.

Pupils' educational experience is shaped by leaders' high expectations for what they can achieve. Pupils, all of whom have education, health and care (EHC) plans, make exceptional progress from their starting points.

Pupils form strong bonds with the caring staff who make it their priority to understand pupils' strengths and needs. Pupils receive attentive support to help them manage their feelings. They behave exceptionally well. Pupils enjoy spending time with their friends. As a pupil said, they are 'surrounded by happiness'.

Pupils know that the staff will do their best to help them if they have any worries. Leaders deal sensitively with their concerns, including rare cases of bullying. This helps pupils to feel safe and secure.

Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to get out and about in the local community and beyond. They take part in such events as sports competitions, dance festivals and residential visits. Pupils travel from a broad geographical area, but leaders work tirelessly to promote a strong spirit of community. Parents and carers are fully involved in the school life of their children.

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

Leaders have forged ahead with their determined vision of continuous improvement at this outstanding school. The school now caters for a larger number of pupils with a broader range of needs. Leaders have embraced these changes and responded to them with their typical positivity.

Leaders worked in consultation with parents and expert consultants to implement an ambitious curriculum designed with meticulous detail and clear aims. This new highly effective curriculum, which is rooted in sound educational research, places pupils' needs at the core.

Leaders and teachers use pupils' EHC plans as a starting point when designing each pupil's personal curriculum pathway. Leaders have selected interesting and stimulating topic themes that act as vehicles to promote pupils' engagement in learning. This provides the opportunity for pupils to practise and apply important knowledge, skills and understanding in a shared context.

Teachers are experts at using the information that they have about each pupil to break down learning precisely into detailed targets. Staff work as a team to keep close track of pupils' progress through the curriculum. They review and adjust their approaches regularly. If teachers notice that a pupil is not achieving sufficiently well, they tap into the pool of professional knowledge available from external specialists and from the collective expertise of their colleagues during scheduled learning conversations. Staff are unwavering in their determination to overcome any setbacks.

Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to creating a dynamic and flexible learning community. They work with experts to further add to the range of effective approaches that their exceptionally knowledgeable staff have in their 'toolbox'. This means that staff select the most suitable approaches and resources to shape provision and support for pupils.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' communication skills through every aspect of school life. Staff use resources such as objects, pictures, symbols and technological aids skilfully to help pupils to control their environment and experiences. Pupils enjoy listening to and joining in with familiar stories, rhymes and songs. Pupils who are ready to learn to read do so in a range of ways, including through learning phonics where appropriate. Leaders have ensured that staff have been trained in a clearly sequenced phonics programme. Some pupils read fluently. They are motivated to read by the range of high-quality books on offer to them.

All staff have been trained in a new emotional regulation and nurture approach to supporting positive behaviour. By developing excellent relationships and strong communication channels with pupils, staff are exceptionally responsive to even slight changes in pupils' demeanour. The impact of the new policy has been transformational. For example, many pupils now choose to access sensory breaks independently. This means that a greater number of pupils are ready to engage with learning.

Leaders' deep commitment to inclusion extends to every aspect of school life. They are determined that pupils should have access to every available opportunity to enrich their education meaningfully. Pupils' views are valued highly. For example, their suggestions have been incorporated into the design of the new outdoor areas. The panel of 'Children's Champions' was involved in staff appointments. Pupils take on responsibilities such as organising a leavers' party and preparing snacks for each other. This helps pupils to develop their social confidence and understanding in a real-life context.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They value the opportunities they have for professional and career development. They appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being.

Members of the governing body are committed and knowledgeable. They share leaders' ambition to continue to improve the school and build on its already notable success.

Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school. They could not speak too highly of the life-changing difference that staff make to their children. Parents cherish the support they receive from the school, saying, 'Kingsbury is more than a school, it is a family.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. This helps staff to stay alert to the small signs that could indicate that pupils could be at risk from or suffering harm.

Staff follow leaders' clear procedures to report their concerns, which are followed up effectively by leaders without delay. Leaders work with external and specialist agencies to provide appropriate support for pupils and their families.

Leaders prioritise meaningful opportunities to help pupils learn how to stay safe. Pupils learn about road safety, online safety and how to negotiate steps and uneven surfaces with increasing independence. They learn about drugs and medicines and personal care. They also learn about consent from an early age.

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 October 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	131259
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10240124
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nicola Clark
Headteacher	Katie Lyon
Website	www.kingsburyprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been several changes to the leadership team since the previous inspection. A new headteacher and two new deputy headteachers have been appointed.
- The number of pupils on roll at the school has increased significantly over recent years. Leaders have recently applied to the local authority to increase the pupil admission number to 120.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs broadly nominated as generic learning difficulties. All of the pupils at the school have an EHC plan. Many pupils have complex learning difficulties, including autism spectrum disorder and sensory difficulties. In addition, a few pupils have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some pupils also have medical needs.
- Pupils attend the school from a wide geographical area of Lancashire local authority.

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 discussions with the headteacher and other leaders. They spoke with subject leaders and other members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke to the school improvement partner and an educational consultant who works with school leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to discuss their views on the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping children safe. They reviewed documentation, including information about attendance and bullying, and spoke to leaders, governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following areas of the school's curriculum provision: communication and language, including aspects of early reading, sensory and physical, and social, emotional and mental health. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' targets. The lead inspector observed some older pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also reviewed other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors met with leaders who have overall and specific responsibility for reviewing EHC plans and reviewed samples of documentation relating to special educational needs.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered their views, shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments and other written communication received from parents. The inspector also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan, the minutes taken at governing body meetings and leaders' self-evaluation documents.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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