

Inspection of a good school: Chapel Green School

Attleborough Road, Old Buckenham, Norfolk NR17 1RF

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 July 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school and engage happily in activities. Many say their favourite part of the day is seeing their friends. They say that staff are kind and will help them if they have any problems. They like having the 'worry boxes' to raise any concerns. Pupils feel safe and are safe.

Most pupils like their lessons. They work hard. The very youngest children learn well. As they get older, pupils do not learn as much as they could. This is because adults do not know precisely what they need to teach them.

Most pupils behave well. They take turns, are thoughtful, play together and enjoy social times with their friends. A small core of pupils who continue to struggle with their behaviour are not as well supported.

Pupils enjoy the extra opportunities, trips and visits they receive. They take part enthusiastically in opportunities such as activities weeks, sports day, the summer fete and the prom. They like to give their views on how the school runs through the school council. They enjoyed interviewing for the new deputy headteacher.

Most parents are very positive about the school. They feel leaders and staff work hard for their children. A small but significant number of parents are understandably worried about the turnover of leaders and staff and the large increase in pupil numbers.

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

The number of pupils attending the school has increased by nearly three times the number at the time of the previous inspection. There have been significant leadership, governance and staffing changes. There has also been a high level of staff absence.

Coupled with the move to a new, purpose-built site, there has been turbulence and decline in the quality of provision.

The new headteacher, since her appointment, has worked systematically and thoroughly to tackle weaknesses in the provision. She has reorganised senior and middle leadership roles to now ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Collectively, leaders have achieved a remarkable amount in the last year. This includes in the management of safeguarding, daily attendance, curriculum planning, assessment systems and behaviour. However, there are still weaknesses in the provision that leaders have yet to address.

Leaders are developing a new curriculum and approaches to assessment. These are well established for the youngest children in the early years. Here, staff are well trained both in the curriculum and in how to support children's specific needs. These children are well cared for, learning well and happy. In particular, the support for children's early communication is highly effective. Children express their views with increasing confidence and clarity.

However, in several subjects, curriculum plans do not lay out precisely what pupils need to learn. Leaders rely on adults to choose aspects of the content being delivered. Some staff are not trained or guided to do this. Staff, including the many who recently arrived at the school, do not know precisely what leaders want them to teach. Leaders' monitoring systems ensure that they know how pupils' specific needs are being met, but not enough about what pupils have learned and understood.

Leaders' approaches to early speech, language, communication and reading are not yet fully embedded. Some staff are not confident in the delivery of these programmes. Staff who are supporting older pupils are not yet trained in the school's agreed approaches. As a result, pupils are not being supported to develop in these areas as well as they should.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) ensures that pupils access the broad topics required by statutory guidance. Leaders are also working to ensure that this curriculum is highly bespoke to the safeguarding and behavioural needs of pupils. Much of this work is already well under way. This planning is more developed than other aspects of the curriculum.

The wider support for pupils' specific needs and well-being is more securely established. Leaders invest in additional external speech, language and communication specialist support to try to meet the increasing range of needs of newer pupils. Leaders have also invested in developing in-house support for pupils' needs, through the social and emotional support team and the physical and sensory support team.

Most staff use well-considered techniques to help pupils learn to regulate their own behaviour. These help pupils to make friends, interact with their classmates well and enjoy their learning.

However, a small number of pupils exhibit more complex needs and behaviours. Staff have not been as well trained to manage this. Leaders do not review all the information that they have about these pupils in order to see where they could be more effective.

Consequently, these pupils are not being supported to regulate their behaviour well enough over time.

Most staff are confident that the new leaders are starting to bring significant improvements in the provision for pupils. They value leaders' thoughtful approach to staff's work-life balance. However, a significant minority do not feel well supported to manage some pupils' behaviour.

Governors bring a high level of expertise, especially in safeguarding, health and safety and finance. They are proactive in their support for the school. Led by a new interim chair of governors, they are increasingly challenging leaders over the information provided to them. However, both leaders and governors do not yet know enough about how well pupils are faring or where they could be more effective in their work. This is the case for their work related to the curriculum, the core of pupils with more complex behaviour and the attendance of pupils with significant periods of absence.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Current leaders have, this year, addressed weaknesses that had emerged in the school's safeguarding approaches since the previous inspection.

The headteacher and designated safeguarding lead work closely with a much-extended designated team to ensure that all concerns that come to them are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

Leaders have invested heavily in staff training to ensure that staff are proactive and vigilant to pupils' needs, or changes in pupils' behaviour. Staff pass on all concerns to leaders appropriately. This training includes extensive training in intimate care and essential health and safety, such as manual handling.

Leaders work effectively with external professionals and agencies to ensure that action is taken to keep pupils safe. Record-keeping is now detailed. Leaders commission regular external specialist audits to ensure that they are doing all they can to provide the best safeguarding arrangements for pupils in their care.

Appropriate pre-employment checks on staff are in place.

Leaders and adults ensure that pupils get regular access to activities that help them understand how to keep themselves safe and how to report any concerns that they have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is a level of staff autonomy in the planning for the curriculum which is not precisely monitored by leaders. Some staff are unclear on the specific content that needs to be covered in each year group and pathway. Leaders do not know how well pupils are being taught the curriculum that they intend. Leaders need to make certain that planning and staff training ensure that pupils are taught the content that leaders intend. Leaders' monitoring checks need to check that the curriculum is being delivered against these intentions.
- Leaders' approach to the teaching of speech, language, communication and early reading is not fully embedded. Some staff have received initial training but are not yet confident in the delivery of these areas. Other staff have yet to be trained. Pupils are not developing as well in these areas as they should. Leaders need to secure staff's training in their chosen approaches to these areas and establish monitoring that checks on staff's delivery of these areas.
- A small number of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour are not being well supported by existing strategies and support. Leaders are not reviewing all information at their disposal. There are gaps in leaders' approach to the assessment and review of plans for some pupils. Leaders should ensure that this approach is improved, so that they review all information with all appropriate stakeholders. Leaders need to ensure that pupils get the right support in a timely way to become successful and increasingly independent.
- Leaders and governors know the broad issues that need action. However, they have less precise understanding about the delivery of the new curriculum, the impact of interventions, behaviour support for pupils with the most complex needs and leaders' long-term impact on those who have the lowest attendance. Leaders and governors need to ensure that their systems and processes review beyond the day-to-day, and give them a precise insight into where they could be more effective over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 good in November 2017.

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	121260
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10255256
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jill Steward (Interim)
Headteacher	Emily Severn
Website	www.chapelgreenschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 December 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took the permanent role of headteacher in July 2022, following a period as interim headteacher. There are several new leaders in the senior and middle leadership team, some of whom were already working at the school but are now in promoted positions.
- Three governors resigned in late 2022. A new interim chair of governors was appointed in January 2023. Several new governors have either recently been appointed or are going through the recruitment process ready for September 2023.
- In May 2021, the local authority identified a range of concerns about the school's approach to safeguarding. Between May 2021 and February 2023, local authority officers undertook a series of visits focused on safeguarding and governance.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was registered to provide education for 60 pupils. Proposed numbers for September 2023 are for 172 pupils.

- All pupils are in receipt of an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils have a range of needs, but most notably moderate learning difficulty, profound and multiple learning disability, severe learning difficulty and autism spectrum disorder. In the last year, an increasing number of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs have joined the school.
- The school was using one unregistered alternative provider at the time of the inspection.

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 conducted deep dives in these subjects; speech, language, communication and early reading; PSHE; physical education and physical development; and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults teaching and/or supporting pupils and, where possible, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. The team inspector also considered aspects of other subjects on the school's curriculum. Inspectors also heard a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the views of 34 parents and carers expressed through Ofsted's online survey of parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included a number of written comments through the survey's free-text facility.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. Inspectors spoke to pupils on site both formally and informally.
- The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also spoke to a local authority commissioned school improvement officer. The lead inspector met with several members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders, including local authority reviews, governors' meetings and documentation related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tessa Holledge

His Majesty's Inspector

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