

Inspection of Fernwood School

Goodwood Road, Wollaton, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG8 2FT

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Chris Gell. This school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Irons.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since April 2012.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school in which expectations are high. All staff work hard to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), feel comfortable and confident and achieve their best. Pupils achieve very well academically and become well-rounded individuals ready to achieve their goals in life.

Staff talk about the 'Fernwood family'. They know that they play a vital role in preparing pupils for their lives beyond school. Staff fulfil this role with enthusiasm. Pupils and staff develop respectful, trusting relationships.

Pupils celebrate the diversity of the school's population. They respect one another and their differences. Staff ensure that pupils engage with the wider world and debate and discuss current affairs. The school has created an equality, diversity and inclusion group to bring parents and carers, staff and pupils together in their drive to continue fostering the inclusive environment that pupils experience.

The school provides a broad range of wider opportunities designed to help pupils develop their talents and social skills as well as to provide for their well-being and mental health. Pupils benefit from residential trips to Sherwood Pines and Hagg Farm. They take part in the school performance of 'Six'. Pupils participating in a poetry competition demonstrate a commitment to their education that is typical at this school. They memorise poems which they then confidently recite, doing so with flair and passion.

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

The school's curriculum has been intelligently designed so that it is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. The curriculum is under constant review so that pupils' opportunities to deepen their knowledge are improving all the time. Pupils consistently refer back to previous learning so that this is not forgotten. They are articulate and confidently use subject-specific language to explain their views of the concepts and issues they learn about. For example, pupils in year 7 geography lessons discuss the physical features of the coast and how humans should best use the coastal environment without damaging it.

Teachers are subject specialists. They precisely and consistently check pupils' understanding. They address misconceptions effectively and provide opportunities for pupils to connect their current and previous learning. Pupils take pride in their work. They use teachers' advice to reflect on what they can do to further develop their already strong understanding.

Pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils receive highly effective, personalised support. Each teacher knows every pupil in their classes well. They know which strategies to use to ensure that pupils build their knowledge. Pupils with SEND develop their confidence as well as their understanding of the subjects they study.

Reading is prioritised. All pupils read regularly. Pupils who need extra help to improve their reading fluency and comprehension are quickly identified. They receive support which they recognise as helping them to become more confident and accurate readers.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are committed to their learning and take pride in their work. They move calmly around a busy school site.

Pupils learn about different cultures and have opportunities to share their pride in their own identities. They take part in cultural days and attend the 'Free to be me' club which celebrates LGBTQ+ contributions to society. The school has ensured that pupils have the opportunity to learn about British values. However, pupils do not yet have a secure understanding of these values and how they apply to their lives in school and society as a whole.

Pupils benefit from a carefully planned careers programme. They receive advice about next steps and how to write CVs. Pupils hear from a variety of employers. They are well prepared for life beyond school and are successful in going on to their chosen destinations.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They value the thoughtful approach taken to ensure that their workload is manageable. Staff benefit from the carefully designed programme of training the school provides to help them teach and support pupils to the best of their ability. A reflective approach ensures that priorities are identified and actions taken to improve pupils' experiences of school. Governors play an active part in the evaluation and improvement process.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need](#)

[of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136724
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	10298468
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1430
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Irons
Headteacher	Christopher Gell
Website	www.fernwoodschool.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 April 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2023.
- The school currently uses one registered and two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, the chair of trustees and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, geography, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development. They also met with leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND, the provision for disadvantaged pupils and alternative provision.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for staff professional development.
- Inspectors met formally and informally with groups of pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses received on Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered responses to the Ofsted surveys for school staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Matthew Fearn-Davies, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Dick Vasey	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Wood	Ofsted Inspector
Louisa Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Sheppard	Ofsted Inspector

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