

Inspection of The Wyvern School (Buxford)

Great Chart Bypass, Ashford, Kent TN23 4ER

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

A sense of community and belonging is evident as you walk around this calm and happy school. Staff understand the different needs of each pupil. Staff ensure that pupils receive appropriate care and education. Consequently, pupils place utmost trust in adults to take good care of them. Everyone happily greets each other using Makaton to sign a cheery hello. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect because staff model these behaviours consistently.

Plentiful opportunities help to develop pupils' sense of curiosity and creativity. Pupils proudly perform Shakespeare plays for their parents or take part in musical workshops, where they get to play along using musical shakers and bells. Pupils enjoy dance classes, which help develop their physical strength and co-ordination. Opportunities like these provide pupils alternative ways to express themselves through the arts.

The school's expectations of what sixth-form students will achieve have increased since the last inspection. Students now study a range of suitable qualifications that prepare them for ambitious destinations. Many students have had work experience either in school or in the community. Students are enthusiastic about their future and feel well prepared to make independent decisions about their next steps.

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

The school's ambitious vision for every pupil's education is reflected in the ongoing important improvements that have been made since the last inspection. Leadership of the school is now secure, with all leaders being in a permanent role. The school offers a number of different pathways to provide pupils with a personalised education. This is informed by pupils' individual needs. In each pathway, there is a clear and ambitious curriculum, designed to prepare pupils with the skills and knowledge that they need to lead fulfilling lives.

In most pathways, staff implement the curriculum well. Enhanced staff training around communication methods is evident in the way that staff interact clearly with pupils. Most staff use Makaton and symbols to help pupils communicate. Where support from staff is most effective, pupils focus on learning for extended periods of time, becoming immersed in activities that promote effective learning. A minority of staff are less confident in how to help pupils engage with learning through play or communicate what they need. When this is the case, some pupils may become frustrated with learning or not engage as well as they could. The school is aware of this and continues to provide training to improve consistency of teaching.

A renewed focus on reading means most pupils are learning to read well. All staff have training to help pupils learn the letters and corresponding sounds needed when reading new words. Most staff are effective at providing precise help. However, a minority of staff are not yet confident in doing so. This means they are not always swiftly identifying where pupils are making mistakes in their reading, indicating that

further support is needed. This means some pupils, including some students in the sixth form, are not yet getting the consistent help they need to become confident and fluent readers.

Staff meet pupils' needs well, enabling pupils to thrive from the support provided. This includes working effectively with parents and medical professionals to make sure pupils come to school regularly. Staff structure learning towards meeting the targets in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Staff break these targets down into detailed plans that identify smaller steps pupils need to achieve. These plans are regularly reviewed with parents and staff. Many pupils on the 'INSPIRE' (I-nurturing, sensory, personalised, individual, respectful, engaging) pathway have profound and multiple learning disabilities. Staff work with health and nursing professionals to provide care that keeps pupils healthy, while enjoying a stimulating learning environment.

When children join the school in Nursery and Reception, staff work with parents and professionals to quickly identify the support children need. Clear and consistent routines help children know what to expect and when. Consequently, most settle very quickly into the structure of the school day. Children learn much of the Reception curriculum through exploration and play. Most staff effectively model how to be curious and help children understand the world around them.

The school has made significant positive changes to the sixth-form provision. In the on-site provision, students learn a range of suitable qualifications such as functional skills in English and mathematics. Many are achieving accreditations in life skills and employment. Students practise important domestic skills such as washing clothes and preparing food in the school 'flat'. An effective careers education extends to all pupils, including those students in the sixth form. Students on the off-site 'CLICK' provision access a broad range of academic subjects. Where appropriate, students spend time in mainstream lessons, working successfully towards achieving GCSE and vocational accreditations.

Pupils are provided with a carefully considered and sensitive education to help them take care of their personal health and well-being. The school's Lighthouse project helps pupils develop their social interactions with others across the school. Regular visits to the community help pupils apply mathematics and literacy knowledge, while promoting life skills such as shopping for food. Pupils are increasingly better prepared for adulthood because of this support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of staff do not have sufficient phonics expertise to support pupils to learn to read well. This means pupils' misconceptions and gaps in reading are not always identified and addressed. The school must continue to ensure that all staff have training needed to deliver the curriculum with accuracy so that all pupils learn to read with increasing fluency.
- Despite recent training, there are still some variabilities in how effectively staff support pupils to communicate and engage with the ambitious curriculum in place. This means pupils do not get the consistently effective support that they need to learn and communicate well. The school must continue to support staff to develop the expertise they need so that they can support pupils to achieve all of which they are capable.

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	131748
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296342
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	352
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Colin Watson
Headteacher	Penny Bullen
Website	www.wyvern.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wyvern School is a large special school supporting pupils who have profound, severe and complex needs. The pupils who attend have a very wide range of learning and medical needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The headteacher was interim headteacher during the last ungraded inspection. They became substantive headteacher in April 2023. Many within the current senior leadership team took up their substantive posts in May 2023.
- Wyvern School runs one primary and one secondary satellite provision for pupils on the CLICK (confidence, leadership, independence, communication, knowledge) pathway, at nearby mainstream schools. The school also runs observation and assessment provision for nursery aged children.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, middle leaders and a range of staff including teachers and support staff. The lead inspectors also met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met individually with leaders responsible for safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, personal development, sixth form and early years foundation stage. Inspectors also met with leaders to discuss how the school supports pupils to learn to communicate well. Inspectors considered the effectiveness of these approaches through each of the deep dive subjects.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and the INSPIRE, STEPS and CLICK pathways. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject or pathway leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, looked at samples of pupils' work and heard pupils read. As part of the deep dives, the primary and secondary satellite provisions were also visited.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. Records of governing body meetings and visits carried out by the local authority were also scrutinised.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys. They also took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Inspection team

Michelle Payne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alan Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Rachel McDonald-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector

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