

Inspection of an outstanding school: Fairfields School

Trinity Avenue, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 6JN

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 March 2024

Outcome

Fairfields School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their school. They are happy and feel safe and valued. Staff know pupils as individuals and help them to develop socially, emotionally and academically. Pupils and staff enjoy positive and productive relationships.

Pupils are excited about learning. They gasp with joy when they have new experiences. Pupils learn through exploration and gain new knowledge through carefully planned and well-sequenced activities. Staff encourage all pupils to develop their ability to communicate and to become more independent.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils listen to stories, handle objects to deepen their understanding, read in different contexts and, as appropriate, use their phonics knowledge to decode words. Pupils understand the importance of reading and enjoy their phonics lessons. One pupil exclaimed, 'This is so much fun!' as she learned new sounds.

Staff have high expectations of every pupil and this allows them to thrive. Pupils study an ambitious curriculum which helps to prepare them for future learning and adult life. It is delivered exceptionally well in classrooms and outdoors. The curriculum is further enriched by a range of other activities, including trips and visits.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They know that they can talk to adults if they have any concerns. Pupils trust staff to quickly deal with the rare instances of unkindness that may occur.

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

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum is well sequenced and adapted to help individual pupils to know more and remember more. Pupils study a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics and the arts. They also learn about

scientific technologies, understanding the world around us and physical health and well-being.

Staff work well as a team in a positive climate for learning. They use questions and assessment well to help to deepen pupils' understanding. Staff have secure subject knowledge and make links with prior learning and the content covered in other parts of the curriculum. Staff present information clearly and use a range of resources very well to help pupils to learn.

As everyone is regarded a reader, there are opportunities for pupils to read throughout the school. Pupils also explore mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures in a variety of contexts.

In common with the rest of the school, the early years provision is very high quality. The ambitious curriculum is carefully constructed to help children to develop their personal, physical and social skills. Children are keen to investigate different activities and they achieve extremely well.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their learning. They behave exceptionally well in class and during social time. Staff help pupils to manage their own behaviour. If required, staff take intelligent, fair and highly effective action to help all pupils succeed in their education.

Several pupils have excellent attendance and many pupils are rarely absent. Some pupils are unable to attend regularly because of illness and medical conditions. The school is doing all that it can to help all pupils come to school as often as possible.

The school consistently promotes the extensive personal development of all pupils. Staff provide a wide, rich and coherently planned set of experiences. Pupils are also given opportunities to develop their talents and interests, for example through the Christmas performance.

The promotion of fundamental British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are embedded throughout the curriculum. The way that staff nurture pupils' character is closely linked to the promotion of the school's values of courage, resilience, fairness, determination and kindness. Pupils are well prepared to play their part in modern Britain.

The school is very well led and managed. Leaders have ensured that pupils' needs are correctly identified and that they are consistently met. Staff use the outcomes in high-quality education, health and care (EHC) plans to help to do this. Leaders are keen to continue to develop the school's provision for the benefit of every pupil.

Staff value the training that they have been given and believe that the school's assessment processes are purposeful. They feel that leaders listen to them and that they are aware of their workload. Staff emphasised the team ethos at the school and outlined how leaders promoted their well-being.

Governors are knowledgeable and passionate. They understand their role and carry it out effectively. Governors ensure that the school has a clear vision, that statutory duties are met, that resources are well managed and that leaders receive appropriate support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 2014.

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 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	122160
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10288322
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katie Usher
Headteacher	Lesley Elder
Website	www.fairfields.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The leadership team and governing body have changed since the last inspection. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher took up their roles in April 2020. The chair of governors assumed this role fully in October 2023.
- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, primarily autism, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.

Information about this inspection

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.
- 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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the inclusion lead, other leaders, the school improvement partner and staff. The lead inspector had a meeting with the chair of the governing body, along with three other governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, personal, social and health education and reading. 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 visited other lessons and observed behaviour in class and around the school. They also scrutinised a range of documentation provided by leaders.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Emma Tayler

Ofsted Inspector

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