

# Inspection of a good school: Greenfields Specialist School for Communication

Prentice Court, Lings Way, Goldings, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN3 8XS

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Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

## 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at this school. All pupils who attend have special educational needs and/or disabilities and have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Staff show great kindness and care for all pupils. They provide a nurturing environment, where pupils are safe and feel happy.

Staff greet pupils warmly as they arrive each morning. Pupils enter school smiling and meet their friends eagerly. They enjoy school and form strong friendships. Pupils are proud of their talents and unique qualities, for example playing piano, performing with the rock choir or taking part in the television show, 'Blue Peter'.

The school has high expectations of its pupils. Staff know pupils exceptionally well. They help pupils to notice and understand their own feelings and the feelings of others. Pupils learn to regulate their emotions. As a result, the school is a calm place. When needed, staff support pupils in a very professional, kind and caring way. This means pupils can quickly return to their learning. Behaviour is seen by all as a form of communication.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about this school. There are many opportunities for parents to come into school. For example, pottery coffee mornings, family learning and family sessions in the school's hydro-pool.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. The key knowledge and skills that they want pupils to acquire and develop have been identified by staff. The conductive education many pupils receive is a strength. However, the school recognises that there is more to do to ensure the academic elements of the school's curriculum are well sequenced. These are not yet as coherently planned as they need to be. As a result,

pupils do not develop new knowledge and skills equally well across the curriculum. Precise monitoring of the academic curriculum is not yet fully established. This means staff are not assessing over the longer term what pupils know and remember. Occasionally, the learning activity choices that staff make within the academic curriculum do not fully meet pupils' needs and do not deepen their knowledge and skills over time.

Different learning pathways enable pupils to learn in a way that best meets their needs. Staff pay meticulous attention to the precise targets in pupils' EHC plans. Staff plan learning to achieve these targets, which are carefully broken down into small steps. Staff collaborate effectively with therapists from the multi-disciplinary team that work with the school. This ensures that therapeutic support is seamlessly woven into each pupil's curriculum. The frequency of these therapies supports pupils in developing their regulation, movement and communication skills. As a result, pupils achieve well from a wide range of different starting points as learning is highly personalised.

There is a total communication approach in the school. Staff take great care to find pupils' preferred methods of communication. Pupils learn how to use a range of communication resources and devices well. This enables them to communicate their needs and access the curriculum. All pupils have a voice at Greenfields and every voice is heard.

Reading is prioritised. All pupils access phonics. Pupils enjoy listening to stories and poems. Books are carefully chosen to support topics, such as the 'eco challenges and global change' topic. Pupils use these texts as inspiration for writing.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils develop their resilience and personalities. There are many activities and cultural events that pupils remember and talk about enthusiastically. For example, the recent Duke of Edinburgh's camp. They enjoy the annual school music festival, 'G Fest'. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. Rooms in the school are transformed into different countries for immersive experiences. Staff teach pupils about how to keep safe.

This school has an absolute focus on preparing pupils for the next stage of their lives. Career education is a strength. All pupils move into life after school successfully. Students in the sixth form enjoy a curriculum that prepares them well for adulthood. They achieve accredited qualifications. Alongside academic courses, students learn how to look after themselves so that they can become more independent. They experience an extensive range of activities within and beyond the curriculum. Pupils enjoy cooking. All students in the sixth form complete work experience. Students enjoy working in the school café. There is a strong focus on enterprise education. Students create craft items to sell, such as mugs and seed bombs.

Leaders have taken steps to reduce workload. They have prioritised staff well-being. Staff value this. All staff are happy and proud to work in this school. They show an absolute commitment and passion in wanting the very best experience for all pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some academic subjects, the essential knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn over time is not coherently sequenced. As a result, pupils do not develop new knowledge and skills equally well across the academic curriculum. The school should ensure that pupils' learning is planned coherently in all subjects and key vocabulary is identified.
- Occasionally, the learning activity choices that staff make within the academic curriculum do not fully meet pupils' needs and do not deepen their knowledge and skills over time, particularly where the curriculum is new and embedding. This is because some staff do not have sufficient subject and pedagogical knowledge to deliver aspects of the curriculum consistently well. This hinders how well these pupils learn and achieve. The school should provide suitable training for staff to ensure that they deliver the curriculum as intended.
- Precise monitoring of the academic curriculum is not yet fully established. The school does not have as secure an understanding of how well pupils are learning over time in some areas of the academic curriculum. This means they do not have as full a picture of where to make improvements. The school should ensure they check how well pupils are learning across academic subjects over time so they better understand where they might need to make necessary improvements to the curriculum or provide interventions to pupils and students in the sixth form.

## 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Greenfields School and Sports College, to be good in February 2018.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141726
<b>Local authority</b>	West Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10269006
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	20
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Steve Jackson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Atack
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.gsscacademy.org">www.gsscacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Greenfields Specialist School for Communication is a special school for pupils aged 11 to 18 who have complex needs, including severe or profound learning difficulties, communication, physical, autism, multi-sensory impairment, and complex medical health needs.
- All pupils and students have an EHC plan.
- The school is a single academy trust, Greenfields Specialist School for Communication trust.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- 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

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication; mathematics; physical development, including conductive education and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work where available.
- To explore the wider curriculum, the lead inspector also discussed the 'My Creativity' curriculum with one of the curriculum leads, exploring the drama strand.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leader and curriculum leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the trust, including the chair of trustees.
- The lead inspector held a discussion with professionals from the multi-disciplinary team involved with this school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation on the school website and documentation relating to the governance of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents and records linking to attendance and behaviour, and school improvement documentation.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, students, parents and staff through discussions and a consideration of their responses to the online surveys, including the free-text facility in Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kyna Adkins

Ofsted Inspector

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