

Inspection of Hazel Court School

Larkspur Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 8EJ

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

The executive principal of this school is Kirsty Eydmann. This school is part of The Southfield Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Remo Palladino, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Neal.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love going to Hazel Court School. They thoroughly enjoy learning and enthuse about the many activities and experiences provided by the school, such as swimming, bike riding and going to the beach. One pupil said: 'You're never in the same place for too long!' Residential trips for the older pupils are a particular high point in the school calendar. Staff work closely with parents, carers and pupils to ensure that all pupils can participate fully.

The school makes a profound difference to pupils' lives, helping them to manage and overcome significant challenges. It is highly ambitious for its pupils, and rightly so. Pupils thrive because of the school's exceptionally strong curriculum, skilful teaching and high-quality care. They achieve extremely well, both personally and academically. All school leavers go on to meaningful destinations. Those who are due to leave at the end of this term are looking forward to the move because they have been very well prepared for the transition.

Pupils are proud to represent their school and do so with great maturity. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils learn how to express themselves using a wide range of strategies. This makes a significant contribution to their safety and welfare, and to their future lives.

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

The school's curriculum is meticulously designed according to each pupil's individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are placed on one of three curriculum routes, with a 'bridging curriculum' for those pupils in Year 10 who are ready and able to access qualification programmes, such as functional skills in English and mathematics. Staff continuously assess pupils' learning, adjusting the content and their approach to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well.

Staff respect pupils and are committed to helping them to achieve the very best outcomes. Pupils are strongly engaged in learning. They work quietly and purposefully in lessons and take great care when completing their work. High-quality care ensures that pupils are very safe and consistently well cared for. Strong relationships mean that staff know precisely what they need to do to help pupils if they are frustrated, anxious or upset.

Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next steps. The curriculum includes a strong focus on building pupils' confidence and independence. The wider curriculum is organised into themes which help to prepare pupils for future adulthood, such as 'new beginnings', 'celebrations and festivals' and 'our world'. Pupils learn valuable practical skills, such as how to use public transport and how to follow a recipe.

Pupils learn how to communicate their opinions and feelings using a wide range of communication strategies, including assistive technology, where this is appropriate. This has a significant impact on their lives, helping them to develop skills which will

support them in the wider community. Pupils learn that their views matter and grow in confidence. They treat adults and each other with respect.

The school's exceptional careers guidance plays a vital role in preparing pupils for life beyond Hazel Court. Preparations for next steps begin at an early stage. Staff work tirelessly to make sure that pupils and parents have all the information they need to make an informed choice about future options. Carefully planned work experience makes a valuable contribution to pupils' employment skills and self-esteem. Staff make sure that the oldest pupils have all the support they need to make a successful transition out of the school. Parents are highly appreciative of the school's role in supporting their children as they move into adulthood. Comments such as 'Parents are made to feel welcome and our child has made amazing progress,' 'My daughter has flourished,' and 'This is an amazing group of professionals who take their responsibility seriously,' illustrate their confidence in the school.

The school gives reading a very high priority, knowing that the ability to read opens doors to future education, training or employment. The reading curriculum focuses on equipping pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to support them in adulthood. Staff use a range of approaches to teach reading, including phonics. Pupils make impressive progress in learning to read in everyday contexts. They thoroughly enjoy books and are keen to listen to a story. Last year, all pupils who were able to access the functional skills programme achieved an accredited qualification in English.

Leaders have built on the many strengths identified at the time of the previous inspection. Robust trust-wide monitoring procedures provide leaders with key information about the school's work. They use this extremely well in a process of continuous review and improvement. Staff report strong teamwork and mutual respect. They are understandably proud of the contribution they make to changing pupils' lives.

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	145254
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10296444
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Neal
Principal	Kirsty Eydmann (executive principal)
Website	www.thesouthfieldtrust.com
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hazel Court School is a special school that caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19 years.
- The school joined The Southfield Trust in September 2018. Hazel Court School has a local governing body that it shares with one other school in the trust.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school specialises in meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

- 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 held a wide range of meetings during this inspection. These included discussions with the executive principal, the head of secondary, the head of further education and other leaders. They also spoke with a range of staff at different times during the inspection.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were gathered through a range of sources, including Ofsted's surveys and discussions. Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and at other times of the school day. They also met with groups of pupils in the further education department.
- 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, mathematics, communication and personal development. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and talking with subject leaders, teachers and pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tash Hurtado

Ofsted Inspector

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