

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Heatherwood School

Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6HQ

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Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

## **Outcome**

Heatherwood School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Lyndsey Proctor. This school is part of Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, (CEO), Warren Carratt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Child MBE.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Care, compassion and a curriculum that enables the pupils to thrive are part of the magic ingredients that make Heatherwood School an inspiring, life-changing school. The pupils are central to the school. Staff are fully invested in the education they provide.

The relationships between staff and pupils are superb. The two-way respect between them is palpable. The curriculum is carefully designed to support individual needs on a personal level. The success of this is clear. Over time, pupils learn how to communicate very effectively. They also build a broad knowledge base in a wide range of subjects.

Staff treat pupils with dignity. Parents feel part of the school. They appreciate the clear communication lines that are available to staff. The school works with external agencies, such as the NHS, to help families support pupils when they are at home.

Reading is taught extremely well to all pupils. Staff read with and to pupils regularly. The books that pupils read match their phonics stage. The school library is well stocked. The books available to pupils excite and engage them in reading for pleasure.

The school is calm. Behaviour is excellent. Kindness is continually celebrated and seen as a strength at Heatherwood.

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

The school has a curriculum in place that is thoughtful and fully inclusive. The structure of the curriculum enables pupils to excel in many different areas. The school supports pupils to start their studies at age three and continue until they are 19 years old. The

personalised approach to learning meets the needs of the pupils. School leaders and staff offer a rich and diverse range of opportunities to learn. Pupils explore the local woods, visit the sensory garden to look at science, along with more formal teaching in the classroom.

Staff create memorable moments in learning to successfully help knowledge stick in pupils' minds. In mathematics, the pupils are proud to show inspectors' column addition. They can explain their thought processes. Pupils enjoyed teaching the inspectors what they had learned.

The reading curriculum is tailored to the needs of the pupils. The school empowers pupils to communicate. Staff have carefully linked reading to communication. Pupils who communicate in a personal way, such as through eye movement or facial expression, are taught to read along with their peers. The school is clear that being able to read enables the pupils to access the curriculum. At Heatherwood, this supports the pupils in making decisions and communicating.

The children in early years are happy. Staff promote pupils to be curious. Resources are used to stimulate senses and curiosity. The staff are supportive of each other. They work as a team to support the children. The use of educational health and care plans is strong throughout the whole of the school. The plans are used to create small steps for pupils and remove barriers to learning. The school knows the barriers to learning that pupils face. The staff work tirelessly, with great success, to remove them. This helps to create a climate for learning that is positive, productive and enjoyable for the children.

Sixth-form students enjoy the responsibilities they are given. Students are ready for their next steps in learning and employment when they leave the school. The staff meet with new providers to support a smooth transition. Regular checks continue with the students after they have started their next phase. This provides a check-in and to see how they are doing. Sixth-form pupils socialise well with each other and with pupils from other schools. Students leave the sixth form with appropriate and helpful qualifications and life skills.

Behaviour in school is excellent. The staff understand the pupils' mannerisms and needs. This enables the staff to understand the difference between a communicated need and a behaviour issue. Positive attitudes to learning are celebrated. Pupil rewards are linked to positive behaviours. Attendance has continued to improve since COVID-19. Leaders are sensitive to the needs of the pupils. When time off school is unavoidable, the school works to engage and support pupils on their return.

The school offers an astounding range of extra-curricular opportunities for the pupils. Clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school are enjoyed by the pupils. Some pupils relax at film clubs, while others develop their sports and ICT skills. Educational visits range from trips to the local supermarket to buy food for the pupil-run café, to residential and theatre visits. The pupils at the school have recently worked with the Royal Opera House. This involved visits from the Opera House to school, where the artists performed music and songs written by the pupils for the pupils. The pupil parliament in school has brought about a change in school practice. One such change is that the school does not use single-use plastics. This is something the school eco-club is proud of. Life and

employability skills are also part of the school's offer. Pupils enjoy work experience placements both in school and the community. This includes office support, running the school café and also delivering food orders from the café to fellow pupils and staff.

The CEO, trustees, local academy council members, leaders in the school and the wider staff body are united in their passion to provide opportunity and make tomorrow better than today for pupils in Heatherwood School. Busy days are the norm at the school. Staff support each other to check on their well-being.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged predecessor school, Heatherwood School, to be outstanding in December 2016.

## 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>	147515
<b>Local authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297487
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<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>	87
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Andrew Child MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lyndsey Proctor
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.heatherwoodschool.org">www.heatherwoodschool.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Heatherwood School is part of the Nexus Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternate providers for education.
- The proportion of pupils eligible to receive the government's pupil premium funding is above average.
- All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in reading, mathematics, and cognition and sensory and active. They discussed the curriculum design with leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers about the curriculum. Inspectors also considered wider subject areas within the deep dives such as science, geography and our world.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust board, including the chair of the trust board, the chair of the academy council, and the CEO.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher. They also met with other senior and middle leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, personal development, attendance and behaviour.
- Members of the inspection team looked at a range of documentation regarding the support pupils with SEND receive.
- 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.
- The responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents were also considered.
- Inspectors also considered the views of pupils from meetings with groups of pupils from across the school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally about the school.

### **Inspection team**

Richard Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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